

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. PENDER CUDLIP).

CHAPTER III. "RING OUT THE OLD."

As everyone had anticipated, it was found, when the will was read, that the late Mr. Ray had left the whole of the Moor Royal property to his eldest son. And as the Moor Royal property was valued at about two thousand five hundred pounds a year, it was naturally assumed by everyone that the eldest son and his wife had every reason to be perfectly well satisfied.

Greatly to the astonishment of all and sundry it was found that the widow was left with two hundred a year only, and on this pittance she had to maintain herself and daughter, for Jenifer was only mentioned in her father's will as the one who was to inherit the two hundred a year at her mother's death. As for Jack, the son, who had not been brought up to any profession, and who had spent his grown-up years in doing nothing more remunerative than superintending the management of the stables and home-farm, he was the inheritor of three thousand pounds and his father's favourite hunter only.

"It was an iniquitous will," indignant partisans of the widow and younger children said. "For a woman who had enjoyed a well-filled purse and a large income for twenty-six years, to be suddenly reduced to what would be penury to her, was a cruel caprice of which no one had ever deemed it possible Mr. Ray could be guilty. She had been a loved and trusted wife. He had never checked her expenditure. He had never regarded anything as too costly where she and their daughter had been concerned. And now he had left her in poverty, and Jenifer penniless."

It was a hard and cruel blow, and, when

it fell upon her first, it crushed out of her mind the memory of a sealed letter which was also mentioned in the will. But this was of little consequence, Jenifer and Jack said. The sealed letter left in the lawyer's hands, to be delivered up to Hubert when he had been three years in possession of the property, could concern Hubert only.

For a time "old Mrs. Ray," as she soon came to be called, was not at all alive to the redeeming feature in the otherwise unjust will, which was this, namely, that her husband had desired that she and Jenifer should have a home at Moor Royal with Hubert so long as either of them desired it. And additionally, that should the widow leave Moor Royal, she should have the right to claim and take away so much of the furniture as she thought proper.

But though the widow was partially oblivious of this compensating clause, Mrs. Hubert Ray was keenly alive to it, and its consequences. Though her father-in-law had been ignorant of her existence, she regarded it as a wicked piece of personal injustice to herself that he should have hampered the inheritance of Moor Royal with any such condition. It dimmed her glory as mistress of Moor Royal that her husband's mother should still seem to have a right in the place; and that Jenifer should be there, free to move about and perhaps use and order things as she had been accustomed to do all her life, was an open and smarting wound to the wife of the reigning power.

She was still in the very early days of her sovereignty when she determined to say a word to Jenifer, which should show her that her mother and herself were far from welcome residents at Moor Royal. She knew that in the saying of this word

she must exercise tact and taste, otherwise Hubert might hear a sound of it that would not be pleasant to his ears.

Her sway over him was almost unlimited—almost, but not entirely. Where his mother and sister were concerned, it was quite possible that he might hold an adverse opinion to his wife. There would be both difficulty and risk, she feared, in dislodging old Mrs. Ray.

She sat over the fire in her own room two days after the funeral and the hearing of that will which had wrought such a change in her fortunes. It was the best bedroom in the house, lighted by a large deep bay-window filled with quaint old painted glass. There was a good deal of heavy magnificence about the furniture and appointments of the room, and its air of comfort was indisputable. Still, she longed to weed out many things, notably the massive old four-poster and the huge Spanish mahogany wardrobe.

"In fact, the only thing I'll keep here will be this duck of an old brass fender, and I'll furnish up to that," she was thinking when Jenifer, after knocking at the door, came in.

Jenifer's eyes had shed many scalding tears during the last few days, but they were clear and sweet as ever now when she came up to the long deep old chair in which her sister-in-law was burrowing.

Mrs. Ray looked at her critically, and began calculating the probabilities of an early marriage on Jenifer's part, "Which would vastly improve the situation for me. The old lady can't work on Hubert as this girl can," she thought, as she moved her dress aside and indicated that Jenifer might take a seat near the fire.

"I came to tell you that mother is coming down to dinner to-night, Effie," Jenifer began, disregarding the proffered chair.

Mrs. Hubert stretched her slender feet out nearer to the fire, and yawned.

"Hubert said something to me about it just now, and do you know, Jenifer, I strongly advised him to persuade her not to do it. Has he spoken to her?"

"Hubert would hardly advise mother to shut herself away from her children," Jenifer said quickly.

"But don't you know—haven't I told you that Mr. Jervoise and Flora will be here to dinner?" Mrs. Hubert said carelessly.

"Oh, surely, surely not," Jenifer cried out; "our father just dead, our grief for him so new, so fresh. You can't have

brought strangers upon us now, you can't have forgotten that mother is broken-hearted!"

"That's only a phrase, Jenifer. Flora and I made up our minds long ago to weed out all such senseless exaggerated phraseology from our talk. And Flora is my sister, so I can't regard her husband and herself as strangers."

Mrs. Hubert Ray resettled herself complacently in her chair as she spoke, and looked at her sister-in-law with steady unflinching eyes. Silently, in such sorrow as she had never known before, Jenifer went back to her mother.

"It will be hard to check her brave attempt, but mother mustn't go down to meet those heartless people." This was Jenifer's first thought. Then she reminded herself that "these heartless people" knew nothing whatever about her mother, or the trouble that had befallen the Rays. And, remembering this, she grew just.

"Mother shall do exactly as she pleases, and if Effie and her people are nice, I'll help mother to see how nice they are," the girl thought bravely as she hesitated a moment at her mother's door. Then she went in, prepared to bear her part of the burden, however heavy it might be.

"Mother darling, dinner's at eight to-night, and Effie's sister will be here. She seems very fond of her sister; Mrs. Jervoise has been so good and generous to Effie, Hubert says."

Mrs. Ray sighed. In Jenifer's effort to speak calmly, and make the best of things, the poor widow heard the first warning note of the change that was to come. She was no longer the first object of consideration at Moor Royal. Effie's sister was coming inopportunistically enough. But sorrow must be laid aside in her presence, for the sake of peace and pleasantness.

It was the first time since her husband's death, that the woman who had been mistress of Moor Royal for the larger half of her life, had come down to dinner with her children. The visitors, Mr. and Mrs. Jervoise, had arrived, and been thoroughly instructed as to the will case by young Mrs. Ray. But, with the exception of their presence, everything was so exactly similar to what it had been dozens of times when Hubert had been at home, and some young lady guest staying in the house, that old Mrs. Ray could surely claim forgiveness for treating Effie as a guest, and taking her accustomed seat at the head of the table.

But the young ruling power was on the alert. At a sign from Mrs. Jervoise, Hubert's wife swept swiftly up to the high-backed chair on which her mother-in-law had just seated herself, and bending down, she whispered:

"Hadn't I better begin to save you trouble at once, by taking my proper place?" Then aloud she added: "Hubert, give your arm to your mother, and take her to her place; how negligent you are. Flora, you must take him in hand again, or he will get quite rough and brusque in this retirement."

"He has never been either rough or brusque yet, but he may get cold and polished as steel under able hands," Jenifer said, forgetting for a moment that resolution of hers to keep the peace, and make the best of things at any price.

"Don't you think polish preferable to rust, Miss Ray?" Mrs. Jervoise asked, glancing and smiling amiably from the seat in which she had been placed on the right hand of the host.

Mrs. Jervoise was an older edition of Mrs. Hubert Ray, a little harder perhaps, on closer observation, but equally slim, supple, self-confident, and agreeable to beholders at first sight.

Her husband was at least thirty years her senior, but she carefully guarded against being forced into the folly of taking the place of an old man's darling. She always was ready to seem to adapt herself to his habits, views, and whims. But in reality she trained him judiciously and unceasingly, and the habits, views, and whims that were studied and consulted in their household were hers.

It was a great triumph to her that she had succeeded in marrying her sister Effie so well. Effie had been her glory and trial for four or five years before Hubert Ray came and solved the difficulty for anxious Flora. Effie had no parents, no money, and no inclination to strive to maintain herself in the overcrowded governess ranks. On the other hand, Effie loved good horses, good dress, and good society. All these she had in her brother-in-law's house. And all these she had at one time seemed ready to relinquish at the suit of a detrimental.

But that danger was successfully passed in these days of which we are writing, and Effie had married wisely and well. Her husband possessed everything in the way of position and manner that a socially ambitious woman could desire, and the Moor Royal

property made the wife of its owner a county power.

Still there were drawbacks. There were a mother-in-law and a sister-in-law, and a sealed letter. This last was the worst of all three in Mrs. Jervoise's eyes, for it could not "be offended or hurt out of the way," as she said to Effie when discussing these drawbacks to domestic, or rather social felicity.

"It will be your own fault if you don't make the old lady and the girl feel that they'll be happier in a house of their own, Effie," Mrs. Jervoise said to her sister during a brief after-dinner chat; "but the letter! No tact can abolish the fact of the existence of that letter. It may be—well, it's no use suggesting what it may be, because all suggestions will probably go wide of the mark. But if I were you I'd never be anything but very kind to Jack Ray, till you know what's in that letter."

"Jack is very good-natured, it's easy enough to be kind to him," Mrs. Ray replied, stirring the coals of her bedroom fire with the toe of her beaded shoe.

"Well, if you're wise you'll be more than kind to Jack; take trouble with him, educate his tastes, make him proud of you, make him less reliant than he is now on his mother and sister. In fact, get Jack on your side so completely that whatever happens he will be your friend."

"I wish you'd say plainly what you're aiming at, Flora!" Mrs. Ray exclaimed impatiently. "Hubert and I are independent of every one; the only good I can ever gain from Jack would be that hunter which his father left to him—most unjustly, I think, for Hubert's the eldest son, and the best horse in the stable belongs to him by right."

"I should leave Mr. Jack in possession of the hunter till he offers it to you freely, as he will if you manage him properly. I know what these gawks of boys are, and so ought you to know by this time. Now we had better go down, before the family have time to find flaws in us, and indicate the situation of them to Hubert."

It was not an agreeable evening to any one of the party. Perhaps Mr. Jervoise made the best of it, for he slept with quiet unbroken persistence from the minute he entered the drawing-room till the longed-for moment arrived when bedroom candles were brought in, and they were free to disperse and go to bed. This was a habit that had been formed under Mrs. Jervoise's direct personal influence, Flora having a

habit of leaving her husband to unbroken repose four or five nights out of every seven that they spent in town during the season.

According to an old custom of theirs, Jenifer and Hubert sat down to chess. They were good and fairly-matched players; but this night Jenifer's thoughts and eyes kept on wandering to her mother, who sat apart from the others absorbed in her own reflections. She held some knitting in her hands—a black silk sock that had been begun before her husband's death, and been intended for him. But she never seemed to pause; the needles moved falteringly, and the rows increased slowly.

It was a relief to her that the two sisters left her undisturbed, and devoted themselves exclusively to one another, and to some new songs which Mrs. Jervoise had brought down from London. They made a pretty picture at the piano, these two fair sisters who were both so cold and radiant in their golden-haired, fair whiteness. Even their dresses conveyed the impression of starlight. For though young Mrs. Ray had put on mourning for her husband's father, she mourned for him to-night in a dress of dull white Indian silk covered with a network of white bugles. While Mrs. Jervoise looked like the Spirit of Foam of the Sea in clouds of snowy cobweb-like lace.

They made such a pretty picture that Jenifer found it easy to pardon Hubert for the lax interest he took in his game, and for the frequency of the long and lingering glances which he levelled at his wife. But she could not so easily forgive him for his forgetfulness of their mother.

"Don't you think we have left mother to her own thoughts long enough?" she whispered, when he proposed another game.

"No; she's interested in hearing those girls," he said complacently. "Effie's voice is in splendid order to-night; she deserves a better piano, and shall have it soon. Come over to them if you'll have no more chess. I haven't heard you sing since I've been home, Jenny; try something now."

She shook her head, but dared not trust her voice to speak.

"Jenny dear, you must break the ice some time," he said kindly, taking her hand, and his tones and gestures overwhelmed her. The tears flashed into her eyes, and a sob which she could not control betrayed her emotion to all in the room.

"Jenifer, my darling, what is it?" her mother cried, rising hastily, and coming forward to her daughter.

"I think Miss Ray is hysterical for want of fresh air," Mrs. Jervoise said, wheeling round on the music-stool. "I hear she has not been out for days and days; young people can't stand want of fresh air."

"It's not that, it's not—I'm not hysterical," Jenifer cried, mastering herself at once.

"What is it then?" Mrs. Ray asked carelessly.

"Nothing—except that I'm a fool," Jenifer said quickly; and with a half-smile and a little shrug of the shoulders, Mrs. Ray dismissed the subject, and turned to the piano.

"I wonder where Jack is?" Hubert said by way of a diversion.

"In the study, reading *The Field*, most likely," Mrs. Ray remarked. Then she sprang up from the music-stool, saying she would go and look for him.

"I think Jack confines his literary studies almost exclusively to *The Field*, doesn't he?" Hubert laughed. "What a fellow he is for sport of all kinds, to be sure. Effie was saying to-day I had better give him the refusal of the home-farm; he'll never be happy at a clerk's desk."

"Has there been any thought of his taking a clerkship, poor boy?" his mother asked pityingly.

"I suggested to Jack that he ought to do something, mother," Jenifer put in; "you wouldn't have him live in idleness, and waste his substance."

"His tastes are all for the country, poor boy," his mother went on; "such a boy for horses, and dogs, and guns," she added in an explanatory tone to Mrs. Jervoise; "while Hubert here has always been one for a London life and London amusements—theatres, and balls, and clubs; and now, you see, Hubert's lot is cast in the country, and it's likely that poor Jack's will be cast in London."

"Not altogether a bad job for Jack, I'm thinking, mother dear; we shouldn't like him to be a mere sportsman, and nothing else," Jenifer said cheerfully.

She was very fond of her younger brother, reasonably and sensibly fond of him, not blindly devoted to him as she had been to Hubert. It grieved her often to think that Jack's sporting propensities might lead him into society in which he would deteriorate, as she had heard of other young country gentlemen deteriorating.

"Then you don't think it would be a good thing for Jack to take the home-farm, Jenny?" Mr. Ray asked disappointedly.

"No, Hubert, I don't think I should like the idea of Jack being tenant at the home-farm," Jenifer said decidedly, though she felt her expression of opinion was giving annoyance to her brother. "He wouldn't have working interest there sufficiently large or engrossing to keep him from wasting a great deal of time."

"I am surprised at you, the daughter of a hunting squire, speaking of hunting and sport generally as waste of time," Mrs. Jervoise put in.

"I won't argue, but I feel that the squire may properly and reasonably do many things that the small tenant-farmer may not," Jenifer said good-humouredly, though she thought that Mrs. Jervoise had little right to intermeddle in Ray matters.

"I am sorry you're against it, Jenny," Hubert said hesitatingly. "Effie and I both thought it such a good thing, as it was an arrangement that would keep Jack near us and yet make him quite independent, that I've already offered it to him."

"And he?"

"Has accepted the offer, naturally enough it seems to me," Mr. Ray said, forcing himself to speak cheerfully. "You're glad, are you not, mother? You'll be pleased to have Jack settled at the home-farm?"

"With a nice rich wife; it's the duty of all poor young men to marry nice rich wives, and I'm sure Effie will try to make Mr. Jack do his duty in that respect," Mrs. Jervoise interposed. "Won't you, Effie?" she added as Mrs. Ray entered at the moment.

"You couldn't tear Jack away from The Field, Effie?" her husband asked laughingly.

"He wasn't with The Field to be torn away. The study was empty, and The Field uncut. Where can he be? How rude of him to go away the first night Mr. Jervoise and Flora are here. Really, Mrs. Ray, you have not brought up your sons to be polite enough to ladies; we had dreadful trouble even with Hugh at first, hadn't we, Flora? He used at one time actually to have the assurance to put his professional duties before our pleasure. Imagine it! fancy a partner in a great Government contracting company's house, letting himself be fettered by business considerations!"

Mrs. Ray threw up her head as she spoke, and looked very bright and bewildering. She talked folly truly, but she talked it attractively, and even those who felt the folly of it most keenly were fascinated into listening to her.

"Hubert was only a junior partner, you must remember," old Mrs. Ray said apologetically, "and there was some hitch about the payment of the money that was to secure him even that position. You see my poor husband was not quite satisfied as to its being the best thing for Hubert after all, and so, though he had such a great deal of capital in it, I think he would have wished Hubert to get out of it, even if circumstances had not rendered it incumbent on Hubert to come home to Moor Royal."

The poor bereft lady explained as much as she knew of the state of the case, so sweetly and gently, that Effie restrained her mirth. She knew—none better—that her husband's share of the business of the firm of which he was a junior partner, was already worth as much to him as the Moor Royal property.

"But if the old lady knew that, she might work on him to be absurdly generous to his sister and brother," the astute Effie reflected. And as it seemed to her an idle waste of the good things that were hers by law now, that they should go to the good of a couple of people who could never benefit her, young Mrs. Ray resolved that the offer of the home-farm should be the best boon bestowed upon Jack by his brother. While as for Jenifer, "her face is a fortune if she only invests it properly; and if she does, what a useful woman she'll be to me by-and-by, Flora."

"Yes," Mrs. Jervoise answered, "Miss Jenifer Ray has got a good deal of old-fashioned family feeling about her. She will always be staunch to her brothers, and she'll make handsome presents to her nephews and nieces, and she'll help to nurse anyone of you that may be ill. But you'll never deceive her, Effie, and she'll never like you. Take my advice: keep straight with Jack, and don't waste powder and shot on the others."

"Jack isn't much of a home-bird; he doesn't give me many opportunities of playing guardian angel to him of an evening."

"Where does he go?"

"To the harness-room to smoke, and sometimes to the vicarage to flirt, I suppose."

"The vicar has daughters?"

"No, he hasn't, but his wife is young and pretty, and has young and pretty friends staying with her very often. My dear Flora, why should I care a penny whether Jack falls a prey to one of these young women or not?"

"I'll never hint that you need care after

that glad day closes that makes known the contents of the sealed letter which the lawyer holds; and oh, I'd forgotten! who is the lawyer? What is he like; old and a fogey, or——"

"Young and beguiling? He's neither, Flora, he's worse than either."

NEW GUINEA.

It is probable that the recent announcement of the action of the Queensland Government, and the discussion which ensued in Parliament, may have caused a considerable searching of maps and geographies for information concerning the island which has been so summarily "annexed." With regard to this particular island the sources of information are few, and not within the reach of everybody. So little, indeed, is known of it, that New Guinea has been called "The Dark Island," and we propose, in view of recent events and prospective agitation, to throw a little light on it for our readers.

New Guinea is about one thousand five hundred miles long, and four hundred miles broad, at its greatest extremes. In superficial area it covers about two hundred and fifty thousand square miles, and it is thus the largest island in the world, if we elect to consider the mainland of Australia a continent. Being placed immediately to the north of Australia, and separated only, at one point, by ninety miles of water from the colony of Queensland, it has, ever since the settlement of that colony, hovered on the horizon of our colonists as a land of mingled golden hope and darkened menace.

The Portuguese are credited with the discovery of the island so long ago as 1526, and they named it Papua, by which name it is still occasionally called, while its inhabitants are almost invariably spoken of as Papuans. The name, New Guinea, is due to a Spanish navigator of 1545, who fancied a resemblance in the coast-line to that of the Guinea coast of West Africa. Although during the next hundred years or so, several Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch mariners visited, or at least sighted the country, the first British expedition which makes mention of it is that of Dampier in 1699. Dampier circumnavigated the island, and had a pretty lively time of it with the natives. In the next century, various British, French, and Dutch vessels paid flying

visits, but the first attempt to collect trustworthy information with regard to it, was not made until about 1845. Afterwards, Captain Owen Stanley (whose name has been given to a range of mountains in the south-east peninsula) in Her Majesty's ship *Rattlesnake* made a survey of a portion of the coast. In 1828, however, the Dutch had attempted to form a settlement at Triton Bay, and they are yet supposed to have a prior claim to a considerable territory in the north-west.

The first attempt at colonisation by Britons was in 1864, when a company was formed for the purpose in Sydney. The practical results of that attempt, however, were small, and although there was a good deal of talk and much memorialising of Government by the people of New South Wales, there was nothing further actually done under their auspices until 1872. But in that year an expedition was despatched in the brig *Maria*, which was wrecked on the Barrier Reef, only a few of the party surviving, to be picked up by Captain Moresby in the *Basilisk*. The fates, indeed, seemed to be against the exploration of New Guinea. Until this time no one had penetrated to the interior, and but few had barely touched the shores. In 1873, Captain Moresby made two voyages, surveyed a large portion of the coast, and discovered and named Port Moresby, a natural harbour on the south-east coast, which has since been the point to which nearly all subsequent expeditions have been first of all directed.

In fact it is to Captain Moresby that we owe nearly all our geographical knowledge of New Guinea. He surveyed almost the whole of the coasts of the eastern portion of the island, rectified many errors of former maps, opened up an archipelago of fertile islands, and discovered a short sea-passage between Australia and China. Captain Moresby's book remains the standard work of reference regarding the geography of New Guinea, but at the same time it must be admitted that the missionaries of the London Missionary Society have also done good service in adding to our stock of knowledge. Messrs. M'Farlane and Lawes have made many trips along the coast in the missionary steamer *Ellangowan*, and have at various times sent accounts of their expeditions. As far as the European races are concerned, intercourse with New Guinea has been practically through the missionaries, and it is pleasant to be

able to record that the labours of these men have been as untiring as they have been noble, and are in marked contrast with the history of some others of their cloth in the South Seas.

They have founded mission-stations all along the south-eastern end of the island, have established schools, and instructed native teachers, with such results that all the trading and exploring expeditions which have followed their footsteps have found the way easier and the native people more tractable than in other quarters. We do not hear of anything like the marvellous conversion of the Fijians, whose rapid and universal adoption of Christianity suggests the uneasy feeling that it may be more superficial than real. Nevertheless, the missionaries in New Guinea have at least got in the thin end of the wedge by which Christianity and civilisation will be driven home. The names of M'Farlane and Lawes should always be remembered as the pioneers of civilisation in New Guinea.

The island has always had a strong attraction for naturalists, and Mr. Alfred R. Wallace some years ago made a visit to its shores, and has told much that is interesting about it in *The Malay Archipelago*, as also in an article in *The Contemporary Review* some four years ago. But Signor D'Albertis, an Italian naturalist, was even more enterprising, and has also been more copious in his communications. Between 1872 and 1878 he paid a succession of visits to the island, and on one of them he penetrated up the Fly River to a point about the very centre of the thickest part of the island. Although Dr. Beccari, Mr. Octavius Stone, Mr. Maklucho Macklay, and other naturalists have contributed to our knowledge of the fauna and flora, to Signor D'Albertis still belongs the distinction of having seen more of the island and of its inhabitants than any other European explorer.

In 1878 and 1879 a number of expeditions went out from New South Wales and Queensland, on the report that gold was to be found on the Goldie River. All, or nearly all, of these had disastrous ends, through fever, quarrels with the natives, and disgust at not finding the El-dorado they had expected. They have added little to our knowledge, and not much to our credit, while they have rendered the way more difficult for their successors on the same track.

And now, to sum up, what do we really know about New Guinea, its adaptability

for colonisation, and its capabilities for employing British capital and sustaining a European race of settlers? The present writer was one of the first to point out several years ago the attractions of the island, and its potential danger in the hands of others, and he has not ceased to collect all the information obtainable with regard to it. That information at the best is but meagre. We know almost nothing except of a narrow fringe of the shores, and many of the reports are very conflicting. A careful balancing of the evidence, however, leads to the conclusion that away from the coast-line, which is unhealthy, the country is suitable for a European settlement to a certain extent. It is not adapted to European labour, and success seems improbable without friendly co-operation with the aborigines. The men who have, so far, gone for purposes of gain have not been the right sort to promote such co-operation; and, moreover, they have made the mistake of approaching the native tribes in numerous and strongly-armed parties. In all cases of hostility on the part of the natives, the beginning seems to have been in the fears aroused by the numbers of the white invaders. As a rule, small parties have been unmolested. Mr. Wallace and Signor D'Albertis lived tranquilly among them, although it is true the latter had some collisions when he steamed up the Fly River; but his party then was larger and more formidable in appearance than on previous occasions. Moresby's testimony bears distinctly in the same direction, and the agents despatched by Sir Arthur Gordon, the High Commissioner of Polynesia, in 1878 and in 1880, experienced no trouble with the natives, even when traversing a section of the country inhabited by cannibals.

Who and what are the aborigines of New Guinea, and whether one race or several, is a much-discussed question, and each explorer seems to have his own views on the matter. That they are in general character different from, and in some respects superior to, the Malays, seems established; but whether the Papuans must be considered as a race by themselves has not yet been fully demonstrated, although that theory is supported by Mr. Wallace. It is to be noted, however, that the sensational accounts which have from time to time been copied from colonial papers of the bloodthirsty attacks made on British sailors and the like, have in all cases referred to the islands and coast-line

resorted to by the Malays for kidnapping purposes. The reception given by the Papuans of these localities to all strangers is, therefore, not surprising. In other localities, and especially where the ground has been broken by the missionaries, they have been found friendly and peaceable. Their physique is good, their habits moral; they treat their women with respect; they are expert fishermen and fair agriculturists. Of religion they seem to have next to none, and their ceremonials are few. We must only speak in general terms, however, for there are several types found in New Guinea, but the majority are what has come to be accepted as the true Papuan race—of small stature, with narrow heads, small chins, large eyes, thick lips, woolly hair frizzled out to a prodigious extent, and of a copper colour of skin. The island is not populous. Mr. Chalmers, one of the missionaries, estimates the population at about two hundred thousand, which may be an underestimate, but it certainly is nearer the mark than the ideas of a recent writer in *The Times*, who wildly talked of millions.

New Guinea is peculiarly rich in vegetation, and it possesses generally a very fertile soil. Its animals are limited to the marsupial tribe and the pig, but it has a great variety of beautiful birds, and among them the famous "bird of paradise," and countless varieties of parrots. There is much timber of a gigantic size, including the camphor-tree, the sago-palm, and the nutmeg. Rice, maize, yams, bananas, and cocoa-nuts are cultivated by the natives, and tobacco also in the hilly districts, while there are several varieties of the sugar-cane. A Mr. Hanran, who, we believe, formed one of an expedition sent from Queensland, thus writes: "From what I know myself, and from what I could learn from others, I think New Guinea will become a rich field for the planter. The virgin soil of the country, producing such rich vegetation spontaneously, and the beautiful sugar-cane and other tropical plants that are grown by the natives, are inducements that will attract the attention of men who will initiate and fertilise the growth of rice, sugar, and other tropical produce. The planter may have dry seasons to contend with, but when we consider that—unlike Northern Australia, where the river-beds are nearly dry the greater part of the year—the rivers are always running, and scarcely fordable at any time, and it is the damp sultry climate

and heavy atmosphere which cause so much ague and fever in the country, there is not much cause for apprehending that great evil. The greatest difficulty the planter will have to contend with will be in finding labour. The South Sea Islander, or the negro who works in the rice and sugar fields of Louisiana, may be suitable; the New Guinea native certainly would." The same writer is also strongly of opinion that the island is auriferous, and there is certainly still good ground for thinking so, although the gold-seekers of 1879 met with hardly any success.

The opinion we have just quoted with regard to the fertility of the island and the manner in which it can be utilised by Europeans coincides with that of D'Alberty and others best qualified to speak. All accounts agree that European settlements on the coast are not desirable, but that the climate on the uplands is salubrious enough, especially in the dry season; and even the coast may be rendered more habitable in time, by the removal of the rank masses of decaying vegetable matter, and the cultivation of the chinchona-tree. In the interior, curiously enough, D'Alberty found a higher grade of civilisation than amongst coast tribes, and better cultivation and appliances for labour and warfare.

We arrive, then, at the conclusion that New Guinea offers large and special attractions, and, that possessing such illimitable natural riches, it cannot much longer remain enshrouded in the mystery which has hitherto enveloped it. Such a mine of wealth must be tapped sooner or later by some one or other of the European nations. Shall it be by England? There are many reasons why it should be so. Occupied, to however small an extent, by an alien race, it would always remain a menace to our Australian children, whose position is precarious enough already in the event of the mother-country engaging in war with any great maritime power. Troops could be massed there, armaments prepared, and navies collected in its natural harbours, wherewith to sweep the rich cities of Australia; and, further, Britons have proved themselves the best colonisers, and, although it has many dark pages, the history of British intercourse with aboriginal races is brighter by far than that of any other European nation. If civilisation and Christianity are to be carried into New Guinea, the work will be better done, we are justified in thinking, by ourselves than by France, or even than by Germany.

To a certain extent the Queenslanders have taken the law into their own hands, but the step they have taken cannot be regarded as final. As yet the Home Government has not confirmed it, and may even disown it, and Queensland is neither rich enough nor strong enough to develop and hold the whole country without other help. The other Australian colonies desire the annexation, but they may not approve of Queensland appropriating the land, although Queensland has certainly the largest stake in the question of proprietorship. In fact, the annexation of such a large country as New Guinea is much too great and serious a matter to be disposed of off-hand. There is no central chieftain to make formal cession, as King Thakombau did with Fiji, and to take forcible possession is neither justifiable nor desirable. The establishment of stations, and the appointment of commissioners authorised by the Crown, seems, however, not only feasible, but imperative, and from such a beginning our rights may be gradually extended by peaceful and legitimate means, until not only the wealth of the country may be properly developed to our advantage, but also the security of our neighbouring colonies may be assured. Between initiating some such policy as this, and allowing the Australians to take their own way, the Home Government will soon have to decide. But New Guinea is not to be won, as many seem to think, by the mere hoisting of the Union Jack in the Queen's name on a tiny speck of its enormous coast-line.

TIME BARGAINS.

A STORY IN TEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

"WHY ought Mr. Cuthbert to consider himself a lucky fellow, Captain Marmaduke? And do you always think aloud when alone?"

The speaker was Lilian Ramsay. She had forgotten her Blue Book, and had come back in search of it.

Marmaduke had not heard her open the door. For a moment his self-possession deserted him, but only for a moment.

"I will answer your last question first, Miss Ramsay," he said. "When living among the Chincas, I used to keep up my knowledge of English by talking aloud when alone, and it would appear that I have not yet got rid of the habit."

"A reasonable explanation. Now for my first question."

"Mr. Cuthbert Naylor is about to marry

Miss Ramsay; consequently Mr. Cuthbert Naylor ought to consider himself a very lucky man."

Lilian flushed a little.

"A compliment after the English style, or the China?" she asked, without looking at Marmaduke.

"The Chincas are a practical people, and attach no value to words without actions. Among them, you compliment a person by presenting him with a choice morsel of fat out of your own calabash, or by delicately insinuating a few slices of cocoa-nut between his teeth."

Lilian laughed.

"A style of compliment which I hope you will not try to make fashionable in England," she said.

At this moment Binks entered the room carrying a letter on a salver.

"A letter for you, miss, marked 'im-mejeate.'"

"Thank you, Binks. Captain Marmaduke, with your permission."

Marmaduke bowed, and crossed to the window. Binks left the room.

Lilian opened her letter, wondering who it could be from. But as she read it, unmistakable signs of surprise and dismay showed themselves on her face.

"Gracious Heaven! can this be true?" she involuntarily exclaimed.

Marmaduke turned.

"No bad news, I hope, Miss Ramsay?"

"Very bad news indeed, Captain Marmaduke. I must see my guardian at once. You will excuse me, I'm sure?"

Marmaduke bowed. All the colour had left her face. Another word and her tears would have come. Marmaduke opened the door, and she passed out with a gentle inclination of her head.

"What can her bad news be?" muttered the captain to himself. "Both her parents are dead—so Jellicop said. But whatever her trouble may be, Cuthbert Naylor will have the privilege of trying to comfort her. I've not seen him yet, but I feel beforehand that I shall dislike him."

At one end of the room was a bow-window with a broad, low, cushioned seat, partly shaded by curtains. Here Marmaduke seated himself. He wanted to think. He was evidently perturbed and ill at ease.

He had been there but a few minutes when the Naylor, father and son, entered the room; the former with an open letter in his hand.

"Was ever anything so unfortunate?" said the elder of the two.

"Better that it should have happened now than a month hence," responded the other.

"You are right there. But such a contingency is too frightful to contemplate."

"The news is too precise not to be true. I wonder whether she has heard it."

"They don't seem to know that I am here," exclaimed Marmaduke to himself.

He coughed, rose from his seat, and came forward.

"We are not alone," whispered Cuthbert to his father.

"Ah, Captain Marmaduke," said the latter briskly. "Thought I saw you at a distance in the grounds a few minutes ago. By-the-bye, have you seen anything of Miss Ramsay lately?"

"She was here not five minutes ago. A letter was brought her, and she went at once in search of Mr. Jellicop."

"Pardon the question, but do you happen to know whether the letter in question contained any bad news?"

"Miss Ramsay intimated as much."

"Then she knows; so much the better," said Naylor in an "aside" to his son. Then, turning to Marmaduke, he added: "Captain Marmaduke—my son. Cuthbert, the name of this gentleman is his introduction. So much for being famous."

"A second edition of his father, bound in calf. Yes; I do dislike him," muttered Marmaduke to himself. Then aloud: "I hope no very serious misfortune has befallen Miss Ramsay?"

"Nothing more serious could well have happened to her, and as the news will soon be no secret I may as well tell it you now. The fact is, that in consequence of the failure of a certain bank, Miss Ramsay has lost the whole of her fortune."

"Fifteen thousand pounds! Think of that," ejaculated Cuthbert.

"Instead of being an heiress, she will be a pauper," said the father, wagging his head solemnly.

"A terrible blow to all of us."

"She and my son were to have been married in a month's time."

"A terrible blow indeed," said Marmaduke.

At this moment Mrs. Wapshot entered the room in a great flutter.

"Vere, I sympathise with you," she cried. "Cuthbert, I condole with you from my heart." Then taking her son by both his hands, she kissed him. "At such a crisis I forget that I am a Wapshot, and remember only that once I was a Naylor."

"Very kind of you, Maria—very kind indeed," said Mr. Naylor, senior. Then he sat down to read his letter again.

Marmaduke strolled to the window.

"Then the news is known?" asked Cuthbert of his mother.

"Such news spreads like wildfire."

"Poor Lily! I wonder how she will bear it."

"She always impressed me as being rather a sensible young woman."

"With judicious training, she would have developed into all I could wish a wife to be. She would have been invaluable to me as an amanuensis—poor Lily!"

"You must not give way, Cuthbert."

"I won't," rejoined Mr. Naylor, junior, with some emphasis.

The Member for Fudgington had joined Marmaduke at the window.

"This marriage will have to be broken off at once," he said.

"Does such a rupture follow as a matter of course?" asked Marmaduke quietly.

"Undoubtedly. The contract being based purely on commercial principles, when one side fails to carry out its portion of the agreement, the entire arrangement becomes invalidated and falls to the ground. Miss Ramsay herself will be one of the first to take the same view of the affair."

"Supposing the case had been reversed, and that Mr. Cuthbert Naylor had lost his fortune; what would have happened then?"

Mr. Naylor coughed, drew himself up to his full height, and buried one hand in the breast of his frock-coat.

"My son, sir, is not rich," he remarked with dignity. "His brains are his sole worldly wealth. Before him looms a great future. For the sake of that future he cannot afford to marry a woman without fortune."

"I quite agree with you that, under the circumstances, it would be moral suicide for your son to marry Miss Ramsay."

He walked to the table, selected a rosebud from the vase which Lilian had filled, and fixed it in his button-hole.

Mr. Naylor looked after him.

"Hang me if I can make that fellow out!" he muttered to his son.

"Hush! Here comes Lilian," exclaimed Cuthbert.

They all turned. She stood there in the doorway, looking very pale but very composed, and never more beautiful than in this hour of her trouble.

For a moment or two she stood, holding the handle of the door, and looking from

one face to the other. Then she came slowly forward.

"I have come in search of you, sir," she said to Mr. Naylor. "And of you," to Cuthbert.

The latter took her hand and pressed it to his lips. She smiled a sad little smile, and drew her fingers gently from his grasp.

"Control yourself," whispered Mrs. Wapshot to her son.

"You have heard of my loss?" asked Lilian with a little quaver in her voice which she could not control.

Mr. Naylor and his son bowed a grave assent.

"Then is my task so much the easier," she resumed. "Cuthbert, between you and me all is now over for ever."

To this Cuthbert apparently had no answer to make. He sat down, began to bite his nails, and fixed his eyes steadfastly on the carpet.

"I am glad this blow has fallen now instead of later on," continued Lilian, "and that your prospects in life will not suffer through me."

"Noble young woman! I knew exactly what she would say," whispered the M.P. to Marmaduke.

"Noble young man!" whispered Marmaduke in return.

"Eh?"

"To give up such a prize for the sake of his future."

"Humph!" and Mr. Naylor turned his back on his new acquaintance.

"Mine has been a pleasant dream, Cuthbert," went on Lilian. "I dare say that in time I should have learnt to enjoy Blue Books as well as, or perhaps better than, any other kind of reading. At least I would have tried to do so. Here is the ring you slipped on my finger one summer evening. 'Wear this for my sake till I exchange it for another,' you said. But we did not know then what would happen—did we?" She held out the ring as she spoke, but Cuthbert stirred not, nor even lifted his eyes from the ground.

"Quite overcome, poor boy! Give me the ring," said Mrs. Wapshot.

Lilian looked at her for a moment, then dropped the ring mechanically into her outstretched palm.

"You are a good girl—very," said Mrs. Wapshot emphatically as she vainly tried to force the ring on to one of her own bony fingers.

"You have behaved admirably," this from Mr. Naylor.

"Admirably," echoed Mrs. W.

Marmaduke turned away, sick at heart.

"I think I have nothing more to say," remarked Lilian a little wearily.

"One moment, my dear. If Maria Naylor Wapshot can assist you in any way—say, as nursery-governess, or as companion to a lady of position—you may rely—"

"Aye, aye! what's that? Nursery-governess! companion to a lady!"

Everyone started. There at the open French-window stood the burly form of Mr. Jellicop.

A passionate sob burst from Lilian's overcharged heart.

"Oh, Uncle Frank," she cried, and next moment she was in the shelter of his arms.

Mr. Jellicop glared round as if he would like to hit out at somebody or something.

"Nursery-governess!" he repeated in a tone of withering contempt. "Not for my Lily—not while Frank Jellicop has a roof over his head or a stiver in his purse!"

NOTE.—The following extract from a clever and interesting work, published by Longmans in 1876, entitled *German Home Life*, would seem to prove that Mr. Vere Naylor's New Marriage Act was not so very far in advance of a state of things actually in existence among our Teutonic cousins at the present time:

"Marriage may be said to be a mere legalised temporary engagement where every facility is given to divorce. Mutual dislike, family quarrels, almost any trivial pretext, is admitted by the Prussian law as sufficient cause for the dissolution of matrimony. For instance, par. fifty-seven of the Ehepatent, which is still in use in Prussia, says: 'Thirdly, we permit a severance of the conjugal tie when between the wedded parties a rooted enmity doth exist, or if an insuperable dislike shall have arisen, and both parties demand divorce.' The pastor of the parish, as a mere formality, admonishes such couples that they must agree; the ecclesiastical court does the same; the one or the other, or both, remain obdurate; and in due course the marriage is dissolved. In the case of one or the other party opposing the divorce out of malice prepense, the court reserves to itself the right to grant the application, in spite of the opposing party, provided it find the petition just.

"To persons who have lived long in Germany the examples of spouses who have dissolved their union, and, after years of estrangement, have been remarried, cannot be altogether unfamiliar."

CHAPTER IV.

THE lawn at Brookfield was a charming lounge in fine weather. Scattered about on it were several fine old trees, in whose ample shade nestled rustic seats and chairs of various shapes and sizes in which one might read or talk or gently drowse through the hot summer afternoons. Here and there a clump of shining-leaved evergreens or an ivied basket of many-coloured flowers lent variety to the scene.

It was the fourth morning after the receipt by Lilian Ramsay of the letter which told her of the loss of her fortune. On a rustic

seat in the shade of a large elm sat Stephen Elliott, one of the most rising painters of the day. He was cutting the pages of a review in an absent-minded way, his thoughts evidently being elsewhere. He was a clever-looking man of thirty, with fairly good features, and with a certain undefinable air of distinction.

He had not been sitting more than ten minutes in the cool shade of the elm when he was joined by Cecil Dane.

"Morning, Elliott," said the latter.

"Morning, Dane," responded the artist.

They had each married a niece of Mr. Jellicop; consequently, their wives were cousins.

"So your papers which ought to have been here three days ago have not arrived yet?" said Elliott, as Dane sat down on the opposite chair.

"No. It's an awful nuisance hanging about here in this way."

"They may come this afternoon."

"Let us hope they will. When do you expect yours?"

"At the end of this week or the beginning of next. If you remember, there was only a few days' difference between your wedding and mine."

From the pocket of his morning-coat Dane produced a tobacco-pouch and a tiny packet of papers, and set to work to manufacture a cigarette.

"And so both our little tragi-comedies are about to end after the same ignoble fashion," he said presently.

"Pitiful, isn't it? When Agnes and I were first married we ridiculed and utterly scouted the idea of parting at the end of three years."

"Just as Linda and I did."

"We vowed to each other that our love should last through life, undimmed and unchanged."

"My own case exactly."

"And to think that all this happened only three short years ago!"

"It seems like a dozen to me."

"I thought my wife an angel, and she believed me to be perfection."

"As long as the honeymoon lasted."

"By the time that was over we both found out how mistaken we had been. After all, I'm not sure that a fellow ought to expect to marry an angel."

Cecil Dane shook his head and looked preternaturally grave.

"Supposing Vere Naylor's Act had never been passed?" he suggested interrogatively a minute or two later.

"In that case we should have been tied up for life."

"The male mind shrinks appalled before such a prospect."

"What do you intend doing with yourself as soon as this business is over?"

"I have some thoughts of a scamper on the Continent for a couple of months," answered Dane, as he proceeded to light his cigarette.

"Not a bad idea. Why shouldn't we join company?"

"With all my heart. As companions in misery——"

"Arcades ambo——"

"We shall be able to mingle our tears——"

"And console each other en route."

"It's agreed then," said Dane. "I will stay till your papers come down, and then we can start together. By-the-bye, there's a youngster in your case, is there not?"

Elliott winced.

"Pardon me, old fellow, if I've touched a sore point," said Cecil, with genuine concern in his voice. "Believe me, I had no intention of doing so."

"It's nothing," said the other. Then after a moment's pause he added: "Yes, as you say, there is a youngster—a boy fifteen months old. He is too young to be separated from his mother. I shall see him, of course, at certain times. Other arrangements can be made when he is older."

Next moment the two men looked at each other. They had heard the sound of feminine voices which seemed to be coming their way. The speakers drew nearer, till at length they were only separated from the men by a thick hedge of evergreens.

"I assure you, my dear, that I have not exaggerated the affair in the least." The speaker was Mrs. Wapshot.

"I would never have believed it of her—never!"

"My wife's voice," whispered Dane to Elliott, letting the glass drop from his eye.

"Such a saint as everybody thought her!"

"My wife's voice," whispered Elliott to Dane.

"Better beat a retreat—eh?" queried Cecil.

"By all means. Mrs. Wapshot carries too many guns for me."

Both the men rose to their feet. Dane flung away his cigarette.

"If all women were like her," he said, "what a remarkable place this planet would be."

"Gently does it."

"We shall get away without being seen."

They stole off on tip-toe round one corner of the hedge of evergreens as their wives, accompanied by Mrs. Wapshot, appeared round the opposite corner. The sharp eyes of the elder lady were the first to catch sight of the runagates.

"Ah, ah! there go our two black sheep."

"Cecil!"

"Stephen!"

"They think they have got away without being seen. Clever creatures!"

"What can they have been talking about?" asked Mrs. Dane.

"About us, perhaps," suggested Mrs. Elliott.

"More probably about themselves," said Mrs. Wapshot with a sneer. "Condoling with each other like the poor blighted beings they are. Let us seize on their vacant thrones; we have far more right to them than they."

Mrs. Wapshot plumped herself down on the rustic seat that ran round the bole of the old elm, while the two young wives, who were soon to be wives no longer, drew up a chair, one on each side of her.

Linda Dane and Agnes Elliott were both pretty women. Agnes was a brunette, tall, lithe, and graceful; with wonderful black eyes, black wavy hair almost as fine as silk, and pure olive complexion. Her profile was perfect—at least her husband used to say so; and being a painter, and a clever one to boot, no doubt he ought to know. There was a slightly querulous and dissatisfied expression about her mouth at times; she gave one the impression of being what she was—a woman who had been spoiled and allowed to have her own way as long as she could remember. Such people have generally a fine faculty for making themselves and those nearest and dearest to them miserable, even when a kind fate has given them everything to make them otherwise. In any case she was very graceful and very winning, with soft, quiet, sunny ways, as though life were one long sweet afternoon to be passed in some enchanted garden where the demon of care could never gain admission. She was mistress to perfection of the art of doing nothing charmingly and without conscious effort.

Between Agnes and her cousin, Linda Dane, there was a marked contrast. Linda had blue-grey eyes and yellow hair, and a face from which smiles were never long absent. She was a rosy, healthy,

fair, blooming young Englishwoman; a product such as no other country seems able to bring to an equally refined degree of perfection. Not without a temper of her own, hasty and undisciplined it may be, but readily brought back to the point of reconciliation. She, too, had been spoiled when younger, but her spoiling had originated in neglect, and not in over-indulgence.

Linda was the first to speak when they had taken their seats under the elm.

"Cecil was smoking, of course," she said.

"He nearly always is smoking nowadays. Papa detested the filthy habit, and so do I. Before I would agree to marry, I made Cecil promise that he would give it up; but the honeymoon was scarcely over before I detected him surreptitiously smoking a cigarette in the garden. He said he was doing it to kill the insects on the rose-trees, and I forgave him."

"You will never find the wretches without an excuse," interposed Mrs. Wapshot.

"By-and-by," resumed Linda, "he began to come home with his clothes smelling of tobacco, and little by little it got from bad to worse, till one day I found him smoking an immense meerschaum. The horrid thing was nearly black. I almost fainted. 'You are determined to break my heart, I know you are,' I said to him. What do you think his excuse was? A medical certificate stating that Cecil had symptoms of heart-disease, and that nicotine administered by inhalation, three or four times a day, was the only remedy!"

Mrs. Wapshot held up her hands in silent protest against such depravity.

"I should never interfere with my husband for smoking," said Agnes in her low musical tones. "I consider it rather manly to smoke. My grievances, I am thankful to say, are of a far deeper dye. If I had twenty daughters, I would say to each of them, 'Never marry an A.R.A.' No one knows what an artist's wife has to put up with. When I came into my fortune a year ago, I quite thought that Stephen would have shut up his studio for ever. We might have bought an estate in the country. Stephen might have kept his hunters."

"And have shot over his own turnips," put in Mrs. Wapshot.

"I might have had my own garden-parties."

"And have given away tracts and flannel to the poor."

"We might have mixed with the county

families, and have become thoroughly respectable."

"And such a prospect did not tempt him?"

"Quite the contrary. He says that his art is like the breath of life to him, and that not for twenty fortunes would he give up his brush and palette!"

"Misguided infatuation!"

"If Stephen will persist in being a painter, why doesn't he paint landscapes, with cows, and sheep, and clouds, or else cottage interiors, with a child and a cradle and an old woman threading a needle, as other married artists do? Instead of which, he will persist in painting from models."

"Models!"

"Of course. Coming and going continually."

"Females most of them, no doubt?"

"And young."

"You are to be pitied."

Linda began to feel that she had been silent quite long enough.

"If my husband were an artist I should not condescend to be jealous of such creatures," she said. "But where there is real cause for jealousy, that is different. I have reason to believe that Cecil sometimes goes behind the scenes of the Lorgnette Theatre."

"A place, I have been told, where they have ballets all the year round. No wonder you insisted on a separation."

"I must say, Linda," interposed Agnes, "that I think you are wonderfully thin-skinned in such matters. Your husband has not treated you half as badly as mine has treated me."

Linda's eyes struck fire in a moment.

"How dare you say such a thing, Agnes?" she cried with a little stamp of her foot.

"My dears, my dears!" soothingly from Mrs. Wapshot.

"How would you like a husband," continued Linda, "who objects to my getting up at seven-thirty to attend matins at St. Crumplins, but who often stays out himself till three in the morning at his club?"

"What would the men say, I wonder, if we had clubs at which we stayed till three in the morning?" asked Mrs. Wapshot; "and yet we have just as much right to do so as they have."

It was now Agnes's turn.

"How would you like a husband who, when I wanted a maid, actually asked me to engage a sister of the — the creature who had sat to him several times for her shoulders, saying she was a most respect-

able girl, and had a blind mother whom she helped to keep?"

But Linda's list of grievances was not yet at an end.

"How would you like a husband who cares more for a racecourse than a classical concert, and who has no soul to appreciate the music of the future? How would you like a husband who doesn't know Faience ware from Palissy, or Rose-du-Barri from Old Chelsea? Above all, how would you like a husband who, when I invite dear mamma to pass a few days with me, actually goes and stays with some of his bachelor friends, saying there's no room in the house for two masters at one time?"

"My dear, you really horrify me!" ejaculated Mrs. Wapshot.

"Cecil and I used to have such delightful little tiffs," pouted Linda; "now he never tiffs with me. Now matter how aggravating I try to be, he only laughs, and makes nasty little sarcastic remarks. It's most unkind of him."

"It's a plain proof how little he cares for you," remarked Mrs. Wapshot as she rose. "And now, my dears, I must go indoors."

"I will go with you," said Agnes. "Somehow, of late, I have felt as if I could not bear to be alone. Are you not coming, Linda?"

"Not yet. The air of the house seems to stifle me."

"You are quite sure, dear Mrs. Wapshot," said Agnes with a touch of anxiety in her voice, "that we are fully justified, Linda and I, in acting as we have?"

"It is not yet too late," said Linda. "The papers have not arrived. We could telegraph, and——"

She looked at Mrs. Wapshot with a sort of pitiful eagerness.

"My dear girls, you surprise me," said that lady, gazing through her spectacles from one to the other. "If you are not amply justified in leaving your husbands, I should like to know who is. Why was the new Act passed, if not to meet cases such as yours? In a few hours, or, at the most, in a few days, you will be relieved of your encumbrances—I might say, of your tyrants—and having regained your freedom, and profiting by the experience of the past, you will know how to command a happy future, and will live to bless the name of Vere Naylor."

She moved slowly towards the house when she had done speaking, and Agnes followed her in silence.

UNPREMEDITATED CRITICISMS.

UNPREMEDITATED criticisms—that is, such as are provoked by the collision of wits or elicited in friendly converse and correspondence—have, at least, the merit of being genuine expressions of opinion, untrammelled by the exigencies of literary composition, the necessity of studying editorial requirements, the fear of offending friends, or of incurring retaliation at the hands of the criticised.

Richardson, for instance, would hardly have cared to engage in public controversy with Sterne; but, corresponding with a feminine admirer, he did not hesitate to brand the humorist's books as execrable productions, and endorsing the verdict of a young lady who pronounced *Tristram Shandy* to be "a little book and little in its merits," which in another season would be as much decried as it was then extolled. In the same safe seclusion did the author of *Pamela* divulge his inability to get through *Fielding's Amelia*, and avow it was beyond his conception that a man of family, who had some learning, and was really a writer, could descend so excessively low in all his pieces.

Writing to a friend, Leigh Hunt objected to being associated with Cobbett, on the ground that, although Cobbett suffered, he did not know how to suffer; and though he fought, he assuredly knew how to run away, and it was doubtful if he was ever in earnest in anything save finding fault and selling his journal. When Byron waged fierce war against the poetic brotherhood of the Lakes, Wordsworth had no more ardent defender than the author of *Rimini*; but in his later years Hunt confessed to "J. F." that he was strongly inclined to do all in his power to depose the god he had helped to set up, finding, on renewed acquaintance, that he was not half the man he had taken him for, and deficient in all the musical side of a poet's nature. "He seems to like nothing heartily, except the talking about it, and is in danger of being taken by posterity—who will certainly not read two-thirds of him—for a kind of Puritan retainer of the Establishment, melancholy in his recommendation of mirth, and perplexed between prudence and pragmatism, subserviency and ascendancy, retrospection and innovation." This would have mightily astonished Wordsworth, as it would, perhaps, have astonished Southey to know that Wordsworth declared he would not give five

shillings for all the poetry he had ever written.

Disraeli's Lord Cadurcis would have been a fitting president for the New Shakespeare Society, asking, as he does, "Who is Shakespeare? We know of him as much as we do of Homer. Did he write half the plays attributed to him? Did he ever write a single whole play? I doubt it. He appears to me to have been an inspired adaptor for the theatres, which were not as good as barns. I take him to have been a butcher-up of old plays. His popularity is of modern date, and it may not last; it would have surprised him marvellously."

Not more marvellously, may be, than to have his Hamlet's assertion,

'Tis not madness
That I have uttered: bring me to the test
And I the matter will re-word, which madness
Would gambol from,

cited before the College of Physicians by Sir Henry Hallford, with the comment that he had found the test an infallible one, and its application in one case had prevented the execution of a will which would have deprived the insane man's heir-at-law of a good estate. Of the butcher-up of old plays King Louis Philippe declared that his kings were as true to life as his lovers. "When the king and queen in Hamlet," said he, "are dismissing their attendants from further waiting, his Majesty says, 'Thanks, Rosencrantz, and gentle Guildenstern;' on which the queen adds: 'Thanks, Guildenstern, and gentle Rosencrantz.' Now, one almost should have been a queen to know that it was needful to balance the seeming preference of the royal epithet by inverting the phrase."

A finer compliment was paid the Warwickshire wizard by Jim Bridger, the famous scout, who died a year or so ago. He once tried city life, but soon bade good-bye to New York and returned to his old station in Utah; none the sadder for his experience, but somewhat wiser, inasmuch as he had learned that a man named Shakespeare had lived and written *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with which the old backwoodsman's fancy had been deeply impressed. One day a traveller came to Fort Bridger, and, after looking over Jim's stock, set his heart on a yoke of oxen, with which he did not desire to part, and the customer went his way unsatisfied. Next morning a messenger came to Fort Bridger from him, to say he must have that yoke.

"He's just waiting for 'em," said the

man; "a sitting there, reading a book called Shakespeare."

Jim was on his feet in a moment, and off to the corral.

"Stranger," said he, "give me that book and take them oxen."

"You're welcome to the book," was the answer, "but I'll pay for the oxen."

Jim was obdurate, however, and had his way. As soon as he got home with his treasure, Jim hired a reader, and every evening followed the fortunes of Shakespeare's heroes and heroines. One evening, the reader had just made an end of the crook-backed king's appeal to Tyrrel to remove his sweet sleep's disturbers, when his auditor, springing from his seat, shouted: "Hold on there! Jest wait till I get my rifle, and I'll shoot that darned scoundrel!"

Rachel is credited with amending Legouvé's *Medea*. The dramatist, calling at the actress's villa at Auteuil, found her amusing herself among the flowers, and proposed a rehearsal of the grand scene in the play, in which he made *Medea* exult over the poisoning of her rival. Rachel went through the scene, and then told Legouvé he must cut it out, or it would prove fatal to the piece as it destroyed its interest. The author insisted that it carried the interest to the highest pitch.

"Yes, the interest in the horrible and odious," said Rachel. "But you forget that I have to kill my children later on, and that I must be pathetic. Now, how could I be so, if a few minutes before the audience had seen me coldly, perfidiously, and in the most cowardly manner commit a murder? If you put in your great scene of the murder of *Creusa*, you should leave out the murder of the children. I should be nothing but a criminal. I should not believe in my own tears!"

For a few moments Legouvé was silent, then, grasping Rachel's hand, he said:

"You are right, I will cut out the scene."

Dramatists, however, would not always do well by taking counsel with the players. After witnessing the first performance of *East Lynne*, at Washington, Edwin Forrest sent for McCullough, who had played Archibald Carlyle, to tell him he ought to be ashamed of figuring in such a demoralising exhibition. He owned that the play was a good one, and declared it might be rendered irreproachable by an alteration of one of the last speeches in it. McCullough thereupon asked the tragedian to alter the speech to his liking, and undertook to deliver it in the new shape.

Forrest accordingly re-wrote Carlyle's reply to the appeal of his erring wife, and was at the theatre next evening to see the result. The play went capitally—handkerchiefs were in active requisition. At last the scene in which the betrayed husband confronts his dying wife was reached.

"Oh, Archibald," said Lady Isabel, "I am on the verge of eternity. Before I cross it will you not speak one loving word to me? Will you not say that you forgive my sin, and when I am dead will forget it?"

Instead of Archibald Carlyle responding with words of pity and forgiveness, he answered:

"No, Isabel, I can neither forgive nor forget. Forgiveness is the prerogative of that God whose holiest commands you have outraged. Nor can I forget the wounds whose scars yet deface my life. I gave no cause for this cruel wrong; but grant that you fancied such a cause to exist, yet you concealed your doubts, and concealment is the grave of love. In that grave you buried not only your own peace, your children's highest pride, your husband's honour, but all human right to interfere between your sin and the moral consequences. Pray Heaven to forgive, but ask me not to forgive. Farewell!"

The curtain fell without a hand, and the manager was so roundly abused for permitting such a violation of the instincts of humanity, that he thought it best to remove *East Lynne* from his bills forthwith.

Seeing a volume of romances in the hand of a coachman he had engaged, a Parisian novelist asked him if he were fond of novel-reading. The man owned he was, but expressed his disgust at the ignorance displayed by authors.

"In one story," said he, "I read of a prince hailing a carriage, flinging himself into it, casting his purse to the driver, and crying: 'Drive me to the Faubourg St. Honoré.' In another, 'She resolved to solve the mystery, sprang into the first vehicle that presented itself, and, flinging her pocket-book to the coachman, said: 'Follow that carriage!'" "Now, in forty years, I have driven thousands of people—all sorts of people, under all conditions, and never has a fare thrown me purse or pocket-book. They have just given me thirty-five sous, or, very rarely, a couple of francs."

At the time of the Crimean War the Queen's eldest daughter exhibited a water-colour drawing representing a grenadier lying dead on the battle-field, his body occupying the centre of the picture. While

the fair artist was putting the finishing touches to her work, the Heir-Apparent came into her studio, and, after examining the picture, exclaimed: "The perspective is all wrong!"

"How is it wrong?" asked the princess.

Taking up a pair of compasses the fault-finder measured the distances from the top and the two bottom corners of the drawing to the middle of the guardsman's body, and finding they were all equal, quietly enquired, "Can that be true to Nature?" walking out of the room without giving his victim an opportunity of expressing her views of criticism by compass. The most privileged visitor to Theodore Gudin's studio would scarcely have presumed to question the truth of his perspective; but when the marine painter ventured to put his favourite animals on canvas, he, to use an expressive Americanism, gave himself away, and impelled a friend to utter the warning: "Take care, Gudin, or the Society for the Protection of Animals will prosecute you for defacing the models of nature." Gudin's horses and dogs were equally horrible, whichever way you looked at them, unlike the sunset of an Italian painter, which a connoisseur averred would make a tolerable sunrise if it was turned downside up.

At a Palais Royal reception, Maxime du Camp, Vernet, Jadin, and Delacroix were talking on art, when the last-named observed that, spite of his faults, Ingres possessed many of the qualities necessary to make a painter.

"Why, he is the greatest painter of the age!" exclaimed Vernet.

Pressed to explain what he found so admirable in Ingres, Vernet owned that he drew like a chimney-sweep, could not make his figures look natural, that his pictures resembled brown bread, and that he had no imagination.

"Well then," queried Delacroix, "if he excels neither in drawing, colouring, composition, or imagination, how can he be the greatest painter of the age?"

"I don't know," answered Horace; "but he is our only painter for all that."

By-and-by he remarked to Du Camp that he almost pitied Delacroix, who could not paint anything resembling a human being, and yet denied Ingres's talent. Parting company with Vernet, his amused listener rejoined Delacroix and Jadin, just in time to hear the former say, "Poor Vernet thinks he can paint!" To this Jadin answered nothing, his eyes searching

the shifting crowd, till questioned by Delacroix he replied: "I am looking for M. Ingres; I want to ask him what he thinks of you."

Julius Beer must have been somewhat puzzled to understand exactly what Rossini thought of him, when after applauding his funeral march in honour of Meyerbeer, the famous composer said, "Very good; very good, indeed; but it would have been better if it were you that were dead, and the funeral march had been your uncle's." There was no doubt about Berlioz's sincerity when, hearing his Reverie et Caprice played by a great violinist, he declared that no artist had ever so completely caught his meaning, and so wonderfully interpreted it; but his rapture would have been considerably diminished had he overheard the violinist remark to Mendelssohn, "I am glad I have got through it; I never had such a task in my life. I have not the remotest idea what I have been playing, or what the piece can be about!"

MR. SCARBOROUGH'S FAMILY.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

CHAPTER LXIII. THE LAST OF AUGUSTUS SCARBOROUGH.

WHEN old Mr. Scarborough was dead, and had been for a while buried, Augustus made his application in form to Messrs. Grey and Barry. He had made it through his own attorney, and had now received Mr. Barry's answer, through the same attorney. The nature of the application had been in this wise: That Mr. Augustus Scarborough had been put into the position of the eldest son; that he did not himself in the least doubt that such was his true position; that close enquiry had been made at the time, and that all the lawyers, including Mr. Grey and Mr. Barry, had assented to the statements as then made by old Mr. Scarborough; that he himself had then gone to work to pay his brother's debts, for the honour of the family, and had then paid them, partly out of his own immediate pocket, and partly out of the estate, which was the same as his own property; that during his brother's "abeyance" he had assisted in his maintenance, and, on his brother's return, had taken him to his own home; that then his father had died, and that this incredible new story had been told. Mr. Augustus Scarborough was in no way desirous of animadverting on his father's memory, but

was forced to repeat his belief that he was his father's eldest son; and was, in fact, at that moment the legitimate owner of Tretton, in accordance with the existing entail. He did not wish to dispute his father's will, though his father's mental and bodily condition, at the time of the making of the will, might, perhaps, enable him to do so with success. The will might be allowed to pass as valid, but the rights of primogeniture must be held sacred.

Nevertheless, having his mother's memory in great honour, he felt himself ill-inclined to drag the family history before the public. For his mother's sake he was open to a compromise. He would advise that the whole property,—that which would pass under the entail, and that which was intended to be left by will,—should be valued, and that the total should then be divided between them. If his brother chose to take the family mansion, it should be so. Augustus Scarborough had no desire to set himself over his brother. But if this offer were not accepted, he must at once go to law, and prove that the Nice marriage had been, in fact, the one marriage by which his father and mother had been joined together. There was another proviso added to this offer;—as the valuation and division of the property must take time, an income at the rate of two hundred pounds a month should be allowed to Augustus till such time as it should be completed. Such was the offer which Augustus had authorised his attorney to make.

There was some delay in getting Mountjoy to consent to a reply. Before the offer had reached Mr. Barry, he was already at Monte Carlo, with that ready money his father had left behind him. At every venture that he made—at least at every loss which he incurred—he told himself that it was altogether the doing of Florence Mountjoy. But he returned to England, and consented to a reply. He was the eldest son, and meant to support that position, both on his mother's behalf and on his own. As to his father's will, made in his favour, he felt sure that his brother would not have the hardihood to dispute it. A man's bodily sufferings were no impediment to his making a will; of mental incapacity he had never heard his father accused till the accusation had now been made by his own son. He was, however, well aware that it would not be preferred. As to what his brother had done for himself, it was hardly worth his while to answer such an allegation. His memory

carried him but little further back than the day on which his brother turned him out of his rooms.

There were, however, many reasons,—and this was put in at the suggestion of Mr. Barry,—why he would not wish that his brother should be left penniless. If his brother would be willing to withdraw altogether from any lawsuit, and would lend his co-operation to a speedy arrangement of the family matters, a thousand a year, or twenty-five thousand pounds, should be made over to him, as a younger brother's portion. To this offer it would be necessary that a speedy reply should be given, and, under such circumstances, no temporary income need be supplied.

It was early in June when Augustus was sitting in his luxurious lodgings in Victoria Street, contemplating this reply. His own lawyer had advised him to accept the offer, but he had declared to himself a dozen times since his father's death, that in this matter of the property he would either make a spoon or spoil a horn. And the lawyer was no friend of his own,—was a man who knew nothing of the facts of the case beyond what were told him, and nothing of the working of his client's mind. Augustus had looked to him only for the law in the matter, and the lawyer had declared the law to be against his client. "All that your father said about the Nice marriage will go for nothing. It will be shown that he had an object."

"But there certainly was such a marriage."

"No doubt there was some ceremony,—performed with an object. A second marriage cannot invalidate the first, though it may itself be altogether invalidated. The Rummelsburg marriage is, and will be, an established fact, and of the Rummelsburg marriage your brother was no doubt the issue. Accept the offer of an income. Of course we can come to terms as to the amount; and from your brother's character it is probable enough that he may increase it." Such had been his lawyer's advice, and Augustus was sitting there in his lodgings thinking of it.

He was not a happy man as he sat there. In the first place he owed a little money, and the debt had come upon him chiefly from his lavish expenditure in maintaining Mountjoy and Mountjoy's servant upon their travels. At that time he had thought that by lavish expenditure he might make Tretton certainly his own. He had not known his brother's character, and

had thought that by such means he could keep him down—with his head well under water. His brother might drink,—take to drinking regularly at Monte Carlo or some such place,—and might so die. Or he would surely gamble himself into further and utter ruin. At any rate he would be well out of the way, and Augustus in his pride had been glad to feel that he had his brother well under his thumb. Then the debts had been paid,—with the object of saving the estate from litigation on the part of the creditors. That had been his one great mistake. And he had not known his father,—or his father's guile, or his father's strength. Why had not his father died at once? as all the world assured him would be the case. Looking back, he could remember that the idea of paying the creditors had at first come from his father,—simply as a vague idea! Oh, what a crafty rascal his father had been! And then he had allowed himself, in his pride, to insult his father, and had spoken of his father's coming death as a thing that was desirable! From that moment his father had plotted his ruin. He could see it all now.

He was still minded to make the spoon; but he found,—he found that he should spoil the horn. Had there been anyone to assist him, he would still have persevered. He thought that he could have persevered with a lawyer who would really have taken up his case with interest. If Mountjoy could be made to drink,—so as to die! He was still next in the entail; and he was his brother's heir should his brother die without a will. But so he would be if he took the twenty-five thousand pounds. But to accept so poor a modicum would go frightfully against the grain with him. He seemed to think that by taking the allowance he would bring back his brother to all the long-lived decencies of life. He would have to surrender altogether that feeling of conscious superiority which had been so much to him. "Hang the fellow!" he exclaimed to himself. "I should not wonder if he were in that fellow's pay." The first "fellow" here was the lawyer, and the second was his brother.

When he had sat there alone for half an hour he could not make up his mind. When all his debts were paid he would not have much above half the twenty-five thousand pounds. His father had absolutely extracted five thousand pounds from him towards paying his brother's debts! The money had been wanted immediately. Together with the sum coming from the

new purchasers, father and son must each subscribe five thousand pounds to pay those Jews. So it had been represented to him, and he had borrowed the money to carry out his object. Had ever anyone been so swindled, so cruelly treated? This might probably be explained, and the five thousand pounds might be added to the twenty-five thousand pounds. But the explanation would be necessary, and all his pride would rebel against it. On that night when by chance he had come across his brother, bleeding and still half drunk, as he was about to enter his lodging, how completely under his thumb he had been! And now he was offering him of his bounty this wretched pittance! Then with half-muttered curses he execrated the names of his father, his brother, of Grey, and of Barry, and of his own lawyer.

At that moment the door opened, and his bosom friend, Septimus Jones, entered the room. At any rate this friend was the nearest he had to his bosom. He was a man without friends in the true sense. There was no one who knew the innermost wishes of his heart, the secret desires of his soul. There are so many who can divulge to none those secret wishes! And how can such an one have a friend who can advise him as to what he shall do? Scarcely can the honest man have such a friend, because it is so difficult for him to find a man who will believe in him! Augustus had no desire for such a friend, but he did desire someone who would do his bidding as though he were such a friend. He wanted a friend who would listen to his words, and act as though they were the truth. Mr. Septimus Jones was the man he had chosen, but he did not in the least believe in Mr. Septimus Jones himself. "What does that man say?" asked Septimus Jones. The man was the lawyer, of whom Augustus was now thinking, at this very moment, all manner of evil.

"D— him!" said Augustus.

"With all my heart. But what does he say? As you are to pay him for what he says, it is worth while listening to it."

There was a tone in the voice of Septimus Jones which declared at once some diminution of his usual respect. So it sounded, at least, to Augustus. He was no longer the assured heir of Tretton, and in this way he was to be told of the failure of his golden hopes. It would be odd, he thought, if he could not still hold his dominion over Septimus Jones. "I am

not at all sure that I shall listen to him or to you either."

"As for that you can do as you like."

"Of course I can do as I like." Then he remembered that he must still use the man as a messenger, if in no other capacity. "Of course he wants to compromise it. A lawyer always proposes a compromise. He cannot be beat that way, and it is safe for him."

"You had agreed to that."

"But what are the terms to be? That is the question. I made my offer: half and half. Nothing fairer can be imagined, —unless, indeed, I choose to stand out for the whole property."

"But what does your brother say?"

He could not use his friend even as a messenger without telling him something of the truth. "When I think of it, of this injustice, I can hardly hold myself. He proposes to give me twenty-five thousand pounds."

"Twenty-five thousand pounds! For everything?"

"Everything; yes. What the devil do you suppose I mean? Now just listen to me." Then he told his tale as he thought that it ought to be told. He recapitulated all the money he had spent on his brother's behalf, and all that he chose to say that he had spent. He painted in glowing colours the position in which he would have been put by the Nice marriage. He was both angry and pathetic about the creditors. And he tore his hair almost with vexation at the treatment to which he was subjected.

"I think I'd take the twenty-five thousand pounds," said Jones.

"Never. I'd rather starve first."

"That's about what you'll have to do if all that you tell me is true." There was again that tone of disappearing subjection. "I'll be shot if I wouldn't take the money." Then there was a pause. "Couldn't you do that and go to law with him afterwards? That was what your father would have done." Yes. But Augustus had to acknowledge that he was not as clever as his father.

At last he gave Jones a commission. Jones was to see his brother and explain to him that before any question could be raised as to the amount to be paid under

the compromise, a sum of ten thousand pounds must be handed to Augustus to reimburse him for money out of pocket. Then Jones was to say, as out of his own head, that he thought that Augustus might probably accept fifty thousand pounds, in lieu of twenty-five thousand pounds. That would still leave the bulk of the property to Mountjoy, although Mountjoy must be aware of the great difficulties which would be thrown in his way by his father's conduct. But Jones had to come back the next day with an intimation that Mountjoy had again gone abroad, leaving full authority with Mr. Barry.

Jones was sent to Mr. Barry, but without effect. Mr. Barry would discuss the matter with the lawyer, or, if Augustus was so pleased, with himself; but he was sure that no good would be done by any conversation with Mr. Jones. A month went on. Two months went by; and nothing came of it. "It is no use your coming here, Mr. Scarborough," at last Mr. Barry said to him with but scant courtesy. "We are perfectly sure of our ground. There is not a penny due to you—not a penny. If you will sign certain documents, which I would advise you to do in the presence of your own lawyer, there will be twenty-five thousand pounds for you. You must excuse me if I say that I cannot see you again on the subject—unless you accept your brother's liberality."

At this time Augustus was very short of money, and, as is always the case, those to whom he owed aught became pressing as his readiness to pay them gradually receded. But to be so spoken to by a lawyer—he, Scarborough of Tretton as he had all but been—to be so addressed by a man whom he had regarded as old Grey's clerk, was bitter indeed. He had been so exalted by that Nice marriage, had been so lifted high in the world, that he was now absolutely prostrate. He quarrelled with his lawyer, and he quarrelled also with Septimus Jones. There was no one with whom he could discuss the matter, or rather no one who would discuss it with him on his terms. So, at last, he accepted the money, and went daily into the City, in order that he might turn it into more. What became of him in the City it is hardly the province of this chronicle to tell.

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"LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY."

By WALTER BESANT,

AUTHOR OF

"ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN," "THE REVOLT OF MAN;"

AND JOINT AUTHOR OF

"READY-MONEY MORTIBOY," "THIS SON OF VULCAN," "THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY," "BY CELIA'S ARBOUR,"
"THE MONKS OF THELEMA," "THE CAPTAIN'S ROOM," "T'WAS IN TRAFALGAR'S BAY," "THE SEAMY SIDE,"
"THE CHAPLAIN OF THE FLEET," "OVER THE SEA WITH THE SAILOR," "THEY WERE MARRIED," ETC., ETC.

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CONTENTS.

I. ALL THE PEOPLE STANDING	1	VII. MATHEW'S FRIENDLY OFFER	42
II. THE ASTONISHMENT OF MATHEW HUMBLE	8	VIII. IS IT TRUE?	47
III. HOW RALPH SOUGHT FORTUNE	14	IX. THE WISDOM OF THE STRONG MAN	53
IV. DEUSILLA'S STORY	22	X. SAILOR NAN'S RIDE	58
V. A SECOND WHITTINGTON	28	XI. THE SALE OF THE COTTAGE	63
VI. THE LETTER AT LAST	35	XII. "GOD REST YOU, MERRY GENTLEMEN"	69

"LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY."

CHAPTER I. ALL THE PEOPLE STANDING.

WHEN the sun rose over northern England on a certain Sunday early in May—year of grace seventeen hundred and sixty-four—it was exactly four o'clock in the morning. As regards the coast of Northumberland, he sprang with a leap out of a perfectly smooth sea into a perfectly cloudless sky, and if there were, as generally happens, certain fogs, mists, clouds, and vapours lying about the moors and fells among the Cheviots, they were too far from the town of Warkworth for its people to see them. The long cold spring was over at last; the wallflower on the castle wall was in blossom; the pale primroses had not yet all gone; the lilac was preparing to throw out its blossoms; the cuckoo was abroad; the swallows were returning with tumultuous rush, as if they had had quite enough of the sunny south, and longed again for the battlements of the castle and the banks of Coquet; the woods were full of song; the nests were full of young birds, chirping together, partly because they were always hungry, partly because they were rejoicing in the sunshine, and all the living creatures in wood and field and river were hurrying, flying, creeping, crawling, swimming, running, with intent to eat each other out of house and home.

The eye of the sun fell upon empty streets and closed houses—not even a

poacher, much less a thief or burglar, visible in the whole of Northumberland; and if there might be here and there a gipsies' tent, the virtuous toes of the occupants peeped out from beneath the canvas, with never a thought of snaring hares or stealing poultry. Even in Newcastle, which, if you come to think of it, is pretty well for wickedness, the night-watchmen slept in their boxes, lanterns long since extinguished, and the wretches who had no beds, no money, and slender hopes for the next day's food, slept on the bunks and stalls about the market. Nothing stirred except the hands of the church clocks; and these moved steadily; the quarters and the hour were struck. But for the clocks, the towns might have been so many cities of the dead, each house a tomb, each bed a silent grave. The Northumbrian folk began to get up—a little later than usual because it was Sunday—first in the villages and farmhouses, next in the small towns; last and latest, in Newcastle, which was ever a lie-abed city.

Warkworth is quite a small town, and a great way from Newcastle. Therefore the people began to get up and dress about five. There were several reasons which justified them in being so early. Even on Sunday morning pigs and poultry have to be fed, cows to be milked, and horses to be groomed. Then there is the delightful feeling, peculiar to Sunday morning, that

the earlier you get up, the longer you may lean with your shoulder against the door-post. Some men, on Sundays and holy-days, like to lie at full-length upon the grass, and gaze into the depths of the sky, till thirst impels them to rise and seek solace of beer. Some love to turn them in their beds as a door turneth upon its hinges; some delight to sit upon a rail; but the true Northumbrian loveth to stand with his shoulder hitched against a door-post. The attitude is one which brings repose to brain and body.

There is only one street in Warkworth. At one end of it is the church, and at the other end is the Castle. The street runs uphill from church to Castle. In the year seventeen hundred and sixty-four the castle was more ruinous than it showed in later years, because the keep itself stood roofless, its stairs broken, and its floors fallen in—a great shell, echoing thunderously with all the winds. As for the walls, the ruined gateways, the foundations of the chapel, the yawning vaults, and the gutted towers, they have always been the same since the destruction of the place. The wallflowers and long grasses grew upon the broken battlements; blackberries and elder-bushes occupied the moat; the boys climbed up to perilous places by fragments of broken steps; the swallows flew about the lofty keep; the green woods hung upon the slopes above the river, and the winding Coquet rolled around the hill on which the castle stood—a solitary and deserted place. Yet in the evening there was one corner in which the light of a fire could always be seen. It came from a chamber beside the great gateway—that which looks upon the meadows to the south. Here lived the Fugleman. He had fitted a small window in the wall, constructed a door, built up the broken stones, and constituted himself, without asking leave of my Lord of Northumberland, sole tenant of Warkworth Castle.

I think there has always been about the same number of people and houses in Warkworth. If you reflect for a moment you will perceive that this must be so, partly because there is no room for any more on the river-washed peninsula upon which the town is built, and partly because while the same trades are practised for the same portion of country there must be the same number of craftsmen, and no more. You may expect, for instance, in every town, a shop where you can buy all the things which you must have yet

cannot make for yourself, such as sugar, treacle, tape, cotton stuffs, flannel, needles, and thread. In country towns the number of things which can be made at home—and well made too—is more than dwellers where there are shops for everything would understand. In Warkworth, for example, there is a blacksmith—a man of substance, because everybody wants him and would pay him well; there is a carpenter and wheelwright, also a man to be respected, not only for his honourable craft, but also for the fields and meadows which he has bought; a tailor—but he is a starveling, because most people in Northumberland repair, if they do not make, at home; a cobbler, who has two apprentices and keeps both at work, because nobody but a cobbler can get inside a boot, to make or mend it; and a barber, who also has two apprentices. There is no baker, because all the bread is baked at home, which is one, among many reasons, why country life in this eighteenth century is so delightful; there is no brewer, because everybody, down to the cottager, brews his own beer—the old stingo, the humming October, and the small beer for the maids and children. Yet, for the sake of companionship, conversation, song, and the arrangement of matches, there must be an ale-house, with a settle round three sides of the room and another outside; and for the quality there must be an inn. There need be no place for the buying and selling of butter, eggs, milk, or cream, because people who have no cows are fain to go without these luxuries, or else to beg and borrow. There need be no butcher, because the farmers kill and send word to the gentry when beef or mutton may be had. There is no apothecary, because every woman in the parish knows what are the best simples for any complaint and where to find them. There is no bookseller, because nobody at Warkworth ever wanted to read at all, and very few know how; one excepts the Vicar—who may read the Fathers in Greek and Latin—and his Worship Mr. Cuthbert Carnaby, Justice of the Peace, who reads *The Gentleman's Magazine*, to which he once contributed a description of Warkworth. There is, in fact, a singular contempt for literature in the town, and it is, I believe, a remarkable Northumbrian characteristic. There are no undertakers, because in this county people have grown out of the habit of dying, so that except in Newcastle, where people fight and kill each other, the trade can only be

carried on at a loss; and there are no lawyers, because the townfolk of Warkworth desire to have nothing to do with law, and are only concerned with one of the many laws by which good order is maintained in this realm of England—that, namely, which forbids the landing of Geneva and brandy on the banks of the Coquet without vexatious and tedious ceremonies, including payment of hard money. If you who live in great towns consider the trades, crafts, and mysteries by which men get a living in these latter days, you will presently understand that most of them are unnecessary for the simple life.

When the first comers had looked up the street and down the street, straight through and across each other, and examined the sky and inspected the horizon, and obtained all possible information about the weather, they gave each other the good-morning, and asked for opinions on the subject of hay. Then one by one they went back to their houses—which are of stone, having very small windows with bull's-eye glass in leaden casements, and red-tiled roofs—and presently came out bearing with them their breakfast, such as two or three kned-cakes, or a chunk of three weeks' old bread, or a slice of bread-and-dripping, or bread and fat pork, or a pewter platter of bread and beef even, with a great pewter mug of small ale. They consumed their breakfast side by side in good fellowship, standing on the cobblestones or leaning against the door-posts, taking time over it: first a mouthful and then a drink, then a period of reflection, then a remark, and then another mouthful. They mostly had the Northumbrian face, which I am told is the Norwegian face—an oval shape, with soft blue eyes; with the face goeth a gentle voice and a slow manner of speech. They are a folk born by nature with so deep a love of life that they desire nothing better than to stretch out and prolong the present. Time, who is an inexorable tyrant, will not allow so much as a single moment to be stretched. Yet, by dint of slow motion, slow speech, a steady clinging to old customs, never doing to-day anything different from what you did yesterday and the day before, always talking the same talk at the same times, so that every duty of each season has its formula, wearing the same clothes, eating the same food, sitting in the same place, and avoiding all temptation to change, it is quite astonishing how the

semblance of sameness may be given to time so that the whole of life shall seem, at the end of it, nothing but one delightful moment stretched out and prolonged for threescore years and ten.

After breakfast, for two hours by the clock they fell to stroking of stubbly chins and to wondering when the barber would be ready. This could not be until stroke of nine at least, because he had to comb, dress, and powder first the Vicar's wig for Sunday. Heaven forbid that the Church should be put off with anything short of a wig newly combed and newly curled! And next the wig of his Worship Cuthbert Carnaby, Esquire, Justice of the Peace and second cousin to his lordship the Earl of Northumberland, newly succeeded to the title. When this was done the barber addressed himself to the chins and cheeks of the townfolk, and this with such dexterity and despatch that before the church-bell began he had them all despatched and turned off. And then their countenances were glorious, and shone in the sun like unto the face of a mirror, and felt as smooth to the enamoured finger as the chin and cheek of a maid. Thus does Art improve and correct Nature. The savage who weareth beard knows not this delight.

It was a day on which something out of the common was to happen; a day on which expectation was on tiptoe; and when at ten o'clock the first stroke of the church-bell began, all the boys with one and the same design turned their steps—slowly at first, and as if the business did not greatly matter, yet should be seen into—towards the church-yard. They were all in Sunday best; their hair smooth, their hands white, their shoes brushed, and their stockings clean; they moved as if drawn by invisible ropes; as if they could not choose but go; and whereas on ordinary Sundays not a lad among them all entered the church till the very last toll of the bell, on this day they made straight for the porch at the first, and this, although they knew that if they once set foot within it, they must pass straight on without lingering, into the church, and so take their seats, and have half an hour longer to wait in silence and good-behaviour, with liability to discipline. For a rod is ever ready in church as well as at home, for the back of him who shows himself void of understanding. The Fugleman, who wielded that rod, was strong of arm; and no boy could call himself fortunate, or boast that he had

escaped the scourge of folly till the service was fairly done.

As regards the girls, who were still in the houses, at the first stroke of the bell, they, too, hastened to put the finishing touch, with a ribbon and a white handkerchief, to the Sunday frock. And then, a good half an hour before the time, which was truly wonderful, they, like the boys, hastened to the church. At the first stroke of the bell, the men, too, proceeded to equip them with the Sunday church-going clothes, which were very nearly the same in all weathers, to wit, every man wore his wide horseman's coat, his long waistcoat with sleeves, his thick woollen stockings, and his shoes, with steel buckles or without, according to their station. Thus attired they turned their faces all to the same point of the compass, and heavily, yet with resolution and set purpose, rolled down the hill into the church-yard.

Out in the fields, and in the fair meadows, and down the riverside, and along the quiet country paths, and among the woods which hang above the winding of the Coquet, the sound of the bell quickened the steps of those who were leisurely making their way to church, so that every man put best foot forward, with a "Hurry up, lad! Lose not this morning's sight! Be in time! Quick, laggard!" and so forth, each to the other; those who were on horseback broke into a trot, and laughed at those who were afoot; the old women cried, alas! for their age, by reason of which limbs are stiff and folks can go no faster than they may, and so they might be too late for the best part of the show; the old men cursed the rheumatism which stiffened their knees, and bent their hips, and took the spring out of feet which would fain be elastic still, wherefore they must perhaps lose the first or opening scene. And the boys and girls who were with them took hands, and instead of walking with the respectful slow step which should mark the Sabbath, broke away from the elders, and raced, with a whoop and a holla, across the grass, a scandal to the mild-eyed kine, who love the day to be hallowed and kept holy.

At Morwick Mill, Mistress Barbara Humble would not go to church, though her brother did. Nor would she let any other of the household go, neither her man nor her maid, nor the stranger, if any, that was within her gates; but at half-past ten of the clock she called them together, and read

aloud the Penitential Psalms and the Commination Service.

The show, meantime, had begun. At the first stroke of the bell there walked forth from the vestry-room a little procession of two. First came a tall spare man of sixty or so, bearing before him a pike. He was himself as straight and erect as the pike he carried; he wore his best suit, very magnificent, for it was his old uniform kept for Sundays and holidays: that of a sergeant in the Fourteenth, or Berkshire, Regiment of Foot, namely, a black three-cornered hat, a scarlet coat, faced with yellow and with yellow cuffs, scarlet waistcoat and breeches, white garters and white cravat. On the hat was in silver the White Horse of his regiment, and the motto "*Nec aspera terrent*." He walked slowly down the aisle with the precision of a machine, and his face was remarkable, because he was on duty, for having no expression whatever. You cannot draw a face, or in any way present the effigy of a human face which shall say nothing; that is beyond the power of the rudest or the most skilled artist; but some men have acquired this power over their own faces—diplomats or soldiers they are by trade. This man was a soldier. He was so good a soldier, that he had been promoted, first to be corporal, then to be sergeant, and lastly to be Fugleman, whose place was in the front before the whole regiment, and whose duty it was to lead the exercises at the word of command with his pike. In his age and retirement he acted as the executive officer in all matters connected with the ecclesiastical and civic functions of the town, whether to lead the responses, to conduct a baptism, a funeral, or a wedding, to set a man in the stocks and to stand over him, to cane a boy for laughing in church, to put a vagrant in pillory and stand beside him; to tie up an offender to the cart-tail and give him five dozen; or, as in the present case, to wrap a lad in a white sheet, and remain with him while he did public penance for his fault. He was constable, clerk, and guardian of the peace.

The boy who followed him was a tall and lusty youth, past sixteen, who might very well have passed for eighteen; a boy with rosy cheeks, blue eyes, and brown hair; but his eyes were downcast, his cheek was flushed with shame because he was clad from head to foot in a long white sheet, and he was placed so clothed, for the space of half an hour, while the bells rang for

service, in the church porch, and then to stand up before all the congregation to ask pardon of the people, and to repeat the Lord's Prayer aloud in token of repentance.

The porch of Warkworth Church is large and square, fifteen feet across, with a stone bench on either side. The boy was stationed within the porch on the eastern side, and close to the church-door, so that all those who passed in must needs behold him. At his left hand stood the Fugleman, pike grounded and head erect, looking straight before him, and saying nothing except at the beginning, when discipline for a moment gave way to friendship, and he murmured: "Heart up, Master Ralph! What odds is a white sheet?"

Then he became rigid, and neither spake nor moved. As for the penitent, he tried to imitate the rigidity of his companion, but with poor success, for his mouth trembled, and his eyes sank, and his colour came and went as the people, all of whom he knew, passed him with reproachful or pitying gaze. The church and the porch and the church-yard were all eyes; he was himself a gigantic monument of shame.

When the boys walked—as slowly as they possibly could—through the porch, they grinned and nudged each other. But for the stern aspect of the Fugleman they would have laughed aloud and danced with joy. They had, however, to move on and take their places in the church, and those were few indeed who were so privileged as to command a view through the open doors of the porch and its occupants.

When the men of the village ranged themselves as in a small amphitheatre round the porch, the younger ones, in a hoarse whisper said each to his neighbour: "Oho! ha! yah!" After which they remained gazing with mouth agape.

The three interjections are capable of many meanings, and may indicate a great variety of feeling. Here was a lad found out and convicted on the clearest evidence and confession: he had made fools of the whole town; here he was before all, undergoing the sentence pronounced upon him by his Worship, Mr. Carnaby; and a sentence so seldom pronounced as to make it an occasion for wonder; and the offender was not a gipsy or a vagrom man, or one of themselves, but young Ralph Embleton of Morwick Mill; and the offence was not robbing, or pilfering, or cheating, or smuggling, or beating and striking, but quite an unusual and even a romantic kind

of offence, for which there was no name even; and an offence not falling within any law. Therefore their faces were fixed in an immovable gaze, and their mouths remained wide-open—some twenty or thirty mouths in all—like unto fly-traps.

When the girls, for their part, walked through the porch they looked at the offender with eyes of pity, and one or two shed tears, because it seemed dreadful that this tall and handsome lad should be compelled to stand up before all in guise so shameful. Yet he had caused many to tremble in their beds. But the elder women stopped as they passed and wagged their heads with frowns, and said: "Oh, dear, dear! . . . Alack and alas! . . . Tut, tut! . . . Fye for shame! . . . This is the end of wickedness. . . . Ah, hinneys! . . . Oh! oh! . . . Look you now. . . . Heigh, laddie! did a body ever hear the like?" and so forth, with grateful rustle of skirts, and so virtuously into the church. A noble example, indeed, for their own boys. Better one such illustration of the punishment which overtakes offenders than fifty patterns of the peace and tranquility in which the good man begins and ends his days. Yet we humans are so foolish and perverse that we sometimes find vice attractive and the ways of virtue monotonous, and give no heed even to the most dreadful examples.

Towards the close of the ringing there entered the church, walking majestically through the lane formed by the rustics, Mr. Cuthbert Carnaby, Justice of the Peace, with Madam his good lady. He was attired in a full wig and a purple coat with laced ruffles, laced cravat, a flowered silk waistcoat, and gold buckles in his shoes; in his hand he carried a heavy gold-headed stick, and under his arm he bore his laced hat; his ample cheeks were red, and red was his double chin. Though his bearing was full of authority, his eyes were kind, and when he saw the boy standing in the porch he felt inclined to remit the remainder of the punishment.

"So, Ralph," he said, stopping to admonish him, "thy father was a worthy man; he hath not lived to see this. But courage, boy, and do the like no more. Shame attends folly. Thou art young; let this be a lesson. After punishment and repentance cometh forgiveness; so cheer up, my lad."

"Ralph," said his wife, with a smile in her eyes and a frown on her brow, "I could find it in my heart to flog thee

soundly, but thou art punished enough. Ghosts indeed! and not a maid would go past the castle after dark, for fear of this boy! Let us hear no more about ghosts."

She shook her finger—they both shook their fingers—she adjusted her hoop, and entered the church. The boy's heart felt lighter; Mr. Carnaby and Madam would forgive him. His Worship went on, bearing before him his gold-headed stick, and walked up the aisle to his pew, a large room within the chancel, provided with chairs and cushions, curtains to keep off the draught, and a fire-place for winter.

After Mr. Carnaby there walked into the porch a man dressed in good broadcloth with white stockings, and shoes with silver buckles. And his coat had silver buttons, which marked him for a man of substance. His cheeks were full and his face fiery, as if he was one who, although young, lived well, and his eyes were small and too close together, which made him look like a pig. It was Mathew Humble, Ralph's cousin and guardian.

At sight of him the boy's face flushed and his lips parted; but he restrained himself and said nothing, while the Fugleman gave him an admonitory nudge with his elbow.

The man looked at Ralph from top to toe, as if examining into the arrangements and anxious to see that all was properly and scientifically carried out.

"Ta-ta-ta!" he said with an air of dissatisfaction. "What is this? Call you this penance? Where is the candle? Did his Worship say nothing about the candle?"

"Nothing," replied the Fugleman with shortness.

"He ought to have carried a candle. Dear me! this is irregular. This spoils all. But—Ah!—bareheaded"—he stood as far back as the breadth of the porch would allow, so as to get the full effect and to observe the picture from the best point of view—"in a long white sheet! Ah! bareheaded and in a long white sheet! Oh, what a disgraceful day! These are things, Fugleman, which end in the gallows. For an Embleton, too! If the old man can see it what will he think of the boy to whom he left the mill? And to beg pardon"—he smacked his lips with satisfaction—"to beg pardon of the people! Ah, and to repeat the Lord's Prayer in the church—the Lord's Prayer—in the church aloud! The Lord's Prayer—in the church—aloud—before all the people! Ah! Dear me—dear me!"

He wagged his head, as if he could not tear himself away from the spectacle of so much degradation. Then he added with a smile of perfect satisfaction a detail which he had forgotten:

"Standing, too! The Lord's Prayer—in the church—aloud—before all the people—standing! This is a pretty beginning, Fugleman, for sixteen years."

If the Lord's Prayer in itself were something to be ashamed of he could not have spoken with greater contempt. The boy, however, looking straight up into the roof of the porch, made no answer nor seemed to hear.

The speaker held up both hands, shook his head, sighed, and slowly withdrew into the church.

Then there came down the street an old lady in a white cap, a white apron, a shawl, and black mittens, an old lady with a face lined all over, with kind soft eyes and white hair, but her face was troubled. Beside her walked a girl of twelve or thereabouts, dressed in white frock and straw hat trimmed with white ribbon, and white cotton mittens, and she was crying and sobbing.

"Thou mayest stand up in the church," said the old lady, "when he repeats the Lord's Prayer, but not beside him in the porch."

"But I helped him," she cried. "Oh, I am as bad as he! I am worse, because I laughed at him and encouraged him."

"But thou hast not been sentenced," said the old lady. "It is thy punishment, child—and a heavy one—to feel that Ralph bears thy shame and his own too."

"I was on one side of the hedge when Dame Ridley dropped her basket," the child went on, crying more bitterly. "I was on one side and he was on the other. Oh! oh! oh! She said there were two ghosts—I was one."

When they reached the porch the girl, at sight of the boy in the sheet, ran and threw her arms about his neck and kissed him, and cried loud enough for all within to hear:

"Oh, Ralph, Ralph, it is wicked of them!"

These words were heard all over the church, and Mathew Humble sprang to his feet, as if demanding that the speaker should be carried off to instant execution for contempt of court. All eyes were turned upon his Worship's pew, and I know not what would have happened, because his periwig was seen to be agitated and

the gold head of his stick appeared above the pew; but luckily just then the bells clashed all together, frightening the swallows about the tower so that they flew straight to the castle and stayed there, and the Vicar came out of the vestry and sat down in the reading-desk, and, as was his custom, surveyed his church and congregation for a few minutes before the service began.

It is an old church of Norman work in parts, patched up and rebuilt from time to time by the Percies, but there are no monuments of them. The Vicar's eyes fell upon a plain whitewashed building, provided with rows of ancient and worm-eaten benches, worn black by many generations of worshippers. The choir and the music sat at the west end. In front of the chancel was a square space in which was set a long stool. While the Vicar waited the Fugleman marched up the aisle, followed by the boy in the sheet, and both sat on this stool of repentance. Then the Vicar rose—he was a benignant old man, with white hair—and began to read in a full and musical voice how sinners may repent and find forgiveness. But the people thought he meant his words to apply this morning especially and only to the boy in the sheet. This made them feel surprisingly virtuous and inclined to sing praises with a glad heart. So, too, with the lessons, one of which dealt with the fate of a wicked king. All the people looked at the boy in the sheet, and felt that, under another name, it was his own story told beforehand, prophetically; and when they stood up to sing in thanksgiving, their gratitude took the form of being glad that they were not upon the stool. When the Psalms were read the people paid unusual attention, letting the boy have the benefit of all the penitential utterances, but taking the joyous verses to themselves. And the Litany they regarded as composed, as well as read, exclusively for this convicted sinner. Among the elder ladies there was hope that the offended ghosts might—some at least—be present in the church and see this humiliation, which would not fail to dispose their ghostlinesses to a benevolent attitude, and even influence the weather.

It seemed to the boy as if that service never would end. To the congregation it seemed, on account of this unusual episode, as if there never had been a service so short and so exciting.

When the Commandments had been recited, Ralph almost expected to hear an

additional one, "Thou shalt not pretend to be a ghost," and to be called on to pray, all by himself, for an inclination of the heart to keep that injunction. But the Vicar threw away the opportunity and ended as usual with the tenth commandment.

He gave out the psalm, and retired to put on his black gown. The music—consisting of a violin, a violoncello, and a clarinet—struck up the tune, and the choir, among whom Ralph ought to have been, hemmed and cleared their voices. The Northumbrians, as is well known, have good voices and good ears. The tune was "Warwick," and the psalm was that which began:

Lord, in the morning thou shalt hear
My voice ascend to thee.

The boy trembled because the words seemed to refer to the part he was about to play. His own voice would, immediately, be ascending high, but all by itself. He saw the face of his cousin, Mathew Humble, fixed upon him with ill-concealed and malignant joy. Why did Mathew hate him with such a bitter hatred? Also he saw the face of the girl who had been his partner; her eyes were full of tears; and at sight of her grief his own eyes became humid.

He did not take any part at all in the hymn.

When it was finished, the Vicar stood in his pulpit waiting; his Worship stood up in his pew, his face turned towards the culprit; in his hand his great gold-headed cane. All the people stared at the culprit with curious eyes, as boys stare at one of their companions when he is about to be flogged. Just then the girl left her seat and stepped deliberately up the aisle, and stood beside the boy in the sheet. And the congregation murmured wonder.

The Fugleman touched the boy's shoulder and brought his pike to 'tention.

"Say after me," he said aloud. Then to the congregation he added: "And all the people standing."

"I confess my fault," he began.

"I confess my fault," repeated boy and girl together.

"And am heartily sorry, and do beg forgiveness."

And then the Lord's Prayer.

The boy spoke out the words clearly and boldly, and with his was heard the girl's voice as well, but both were nearly drowned by the loud voice of the Fugleman.

It was over then. All sat down; the

girl beside Ralph on the stool of repentance, and the sermon began.

The sermon which the Vicar read had nothing to do with the penance just performed; it was a learned discourse, which would be afterwards published, showing the Divine origin of the Hierarchy; it was stuffed full of references to the Fathers, and conviction was conveyed to his hearers' hearts (in case the argument was difficult to follow) by quotations of Greek in the original. His Worship fell fast asleep; all the men in the church followed his example; the boys pinched and kicked each other, safe from the Fugleman for once; the women and the girls alone kept their eyes open, because they had on their best things, and with fine clothes go good manners, and the feminine sex loveth above all things to feel well dressed and therefore compelled to be well behaved. Even the Fugleman allowed his eyelids to drop, but never relinquished his pike; and the girl, holding Ralph fast by the hand, wondered if they would ever, as long as they lived, these two, recover from the dreadful disgrace of that morning.

When the Vicar had drubbed the pulpit to the very end of his manuscript, and the service was over, the three stood up again and remained standing till the people were all gone.

"Come, lass," said the Fugleman when the church was empty, "we can all go now. Off with that rag, Master Ralph."

He unbent; his face assumed a human expression; he laid down the pike.

"What odds, I say, is a white sheet? Why, think 'twas a show for the lads which they haven't had for many a year. And May nigh gone already, and never a man in the stocks yet, and the pillory rotting for want of custom, and never a thief flogged, nor a bear-baiting. If it 'twasn't for the cocks of a Sunday afternoon and the wrestling, there would have been nothing for the poor fellows but your ghosts to keep 'em out of mischief. And, lad," he pointed in the direction of the mill, "your cousin means more mischief. It was him that laid information before his Worship."

"Oh!" said Ralph, clenching his fists.

"Aye, him it was, and his Worship thought it mean, but he was bound to take notice, for why, says his Worship, 'he can't let this boy frighten all the maids out of their silly senses. Yet, for his own cousin and his guardian——' that's what his Worship said."

"Oh!" Again Ralph clenched his fists.

"Should I, an old soldier, preach mutiny? Never. But seeing that your cousin is no rightful officer of yourn, nor yet commissioned to carry pike in your company, why, I, for one——"

"What, Fugleman?"

"I, for one, if I was a well-grown boy, nigh upon seventeen, the next time he gave orders for another six dozen, or even three dozen, I would ask him if he was strong enough to tie up a mutineer."

The boy nodded his head.

"Cousin thof he be," continued the Fugleman, "captain or lieutenant is he not."

The boy had by this time divested himself of his sheet, and stood dressed in a long brown coat and plainly-cut waistcoat; he, too, wore silver buckles to his shoes, like his cousin, but not silver buttons; his hair was tied with a black ribbon, and his hat was plain, without lace or ornament.

When his adviser had finished, he walked slowly down the empty church, hand-in-hand with the girl.

In the porch he stopped, threw his arm round her neck, and kissed her twice.

"No one but you, Drusy," he said, "would have done it. I'll never forget it, never, as long as I live. Go home to Granny, my dear, and have your dinner."

"And you will go home, too, Ralph?"

"Yes, I am going home. I've got to have a talk with Mathew Humble."

Left alone in the church, the Fugleman sat down irreverently on the steps of the pulpit, and laughed aloud.

"Mathew Humble," he said, "is going to be astonished."

CHAPTER II. THE ASTONISHMENT OF MATHEW HUMBLE.

By this time the people had dispersed quadrivious—that is to say, north, south, east, and west; and were making their way homewards, their appetites for dinner keener than usual. Penance, considered as a Sunday show, hath no fellow; it is even superior to the stocks, which is a week-day show. You may not pelt a man in a white sheet with rotten eggs, it is true; but the same objection applies to the stocks. Of course, it cannot compare with a good pillory, which is rare, especially when eggs are plentiful and rotten apples lying under every tree; or with a really heartfelt whipping of a vagabond or gipsy at the cart-tail, which is, unfortunately, rarer still. Among simple people there

is a feeling that the greater the pain endured by the subject, the greater is the pleasure of the onlooker. Just in the same way did the Roman ladies discuss among themselves before the play whether it was more desirable to see Hercules—represented by the young Herr Hermann newly arrived from the Rhine—burning to death in a shirt of pitch; or Scævola—done to the life by that gallant captive, Owen ap Rice, from Britain—thrusting his bare arm into a clear fire and keeping it there till the hand was burnt off; or Actæon—played with spirit by Joseph Ben Eleazar, the swift-footed Syrian—pursued and torn to pieces by the hounds of Dian.

Ralph walked quickly past some of these groups, who fell back to right and left, and looked at him curiously. On ordinary Sundays he would have a pleasant word with all, a kiss for the children, and a challenge for the boys. To-day he passed them without a word, with head erect, eyes flashing, and clenched fist. He was not thinking of salutations; he was thinking what he should do: how he should begin his mutiny: what would be the issue of the fight. Whatever the result, there would be joy in bringing, if only for once, hand, fist, or stick into contact with the face or figure of his cousin. It was he, was it, who informed against him to his Worship? It was no other than his cousin who had compassed this most disagreeable of mornings. And now, doubtless, he waited, with a great cane, his arrival at home, in order to administer another of those "corrections" of which he was so fond. Hitherto, Ralph had submitted quietly; but he had been growing; he was within a month of seventeen; was it to be endured that he should be beaten and flogged like a child of ten, because his cousin hated him?

The girls, as he strode past them regardless, looked at him with great pity, because they knew—everybody knew—what awaited him. And Mathew Humble such a hard man! Poor lad! Yet those who mock spirits and fairies never fail to have cause for repentance in the long run; and punishment had fallen swiftly upon Ralph. Perhaps, after this, he would respect the things which belong to the other world.

Heavens! one might as well sit among the ruins of Dunstanburgh after dark and pretend to be the Seeker; or within the chapel of Dilston at midnight and pretend to be Lady Derwentwater's troubled spirit;

and then hope to escape scot-free. Yet, poor lad! and Mathew so hard a man!

What Ralph said to himself—justifying rebellion, because he was a conscientious lad—was this: "His Worship said that the penance would be enough; who was Mathew, then, to override the decision of the court?" Also, he was past the age of flogging, being now able to hold his own against most—whether at quarterstaff, single-stick, or wrestling—young men older than himself; lastly, since Mathew had played this trick, he wanted revenge. But Mathew was his guardian; very well, then let him learn—— But here he broke down, because he could not, for the moment, think of any lesson which his own rebellion would be likely to teach his cousin.

When Ralph left the fields and turned into the lane leading down to the river, he began to look about among the trees and underwood as if searching for something. Presently he espied a long pliant alder-branch in its second year of growth which seemed promising. He cut it to a length of about three feet, trimmed off leaves and twigs, and balanced it critically with a tentative flourish or two in the air.

"As thick as my thumb," he said, "and as heavy as his cane. Blow for blow, Cousin Mathew. This will curl round his shoulders and leave its mark upon his legs."

Morwick Mill stands upon the River Coquet, about two miles from Warkworth. You can easily get to it by following the banks of the river, which is perhaps the best way, though sometimes you must off shoes and stockings and wade across knee-deep to the other side.

The mill consists of a square house upon the edge of the river, with a great wheel on one side; and almost all the water of the river is here diverted so as to form a sufficient power for the mill-wheel. At the back of the mill, which is also a substantial dwelling-house, is a great careless garden with pigsties and linneys for cattle, and vegetables and fruit-trees; and at the side are two or three cottages, where live the people employed at the mill. All the fields which lie sloping up from the river-side belong, as well, to the owner of the mill. The owner at this moment was no other than the scapegrace Ralph; and his cousin, Mathew Humble, was his guardian, who had nothing at all in the world of his own but a little farm of thirty acres. The thought of this great inheritance, compared with his own meagre holding, filled the

good guardian's heart with bitterness, and his arm, when it came to correction, with a superhuman strength. He would be guardian for four years more; then he would have to give a strict account of his guardianship; and the burden of this obligation, though he had only held the post for two years, filled him with such wrath and anxiety that he was fain, when he did think upon it, which was often, to pull the cork out of a certain stone jar and allay his anxieties with a dram of strong waters. He was very anxious, because already the accounts were confused; the stone jar was always handy; therefore, he had become swollen about the neck and coarse of nose, which was a full and prominent feature, and flabby, as well as fiery, about the cheeks. In these times of much drinking many men become pendulous of cheek and ruddy of nose at forty or so, but few at six-and-twenty. Mathew was not, at this time, much more than six-and-twenty; say ten years older than Ralph.

The kitchen, dining-room, and sitting-room of Morwick Mill was a large low room, with one long window. At the sides of the room, and between the great joists, were hanging sides of bacon and hams, besides pewter-pots and pewter-dishes, brightly polished wooden platters, china cups, brass vessels, whips, bridles, a loaded blunderbuss, cudgels, strings of onions, dried herbs of every kind, and all the thousand things wanted for the conduct of a household. At one end was a noble fire of logs burning in an ample chimney, and before the fire a great piece of beef roasting, and now, to outward scrutiny and the sense of smell, ready to be dished. A middle-aged woman, full, comely, and good-natured of aspect, was engaged in preparation for that critical operation. This was Prudence, who had lived at the mill all her life.

She looked up as Ralph appeared in the doorway, and shook her head, but more in pity than in reproach. And she looked sideways, by way of friendly warning, in the direction of the table, at which sat another woman of different appearance. She was, perhaps, five or six and thirty, with thin features and sour expression, not improved by a cast in her eye. This was Barbara, sister of Mathew Humble, and now acting in the capacity of mistress of Morwick Mill, for her brother was not married. She had open before her the Bible, and she had found a most beautiful collection of texts appropriate to the

case of Fools in the Book of Proverbs. The table was laid for dinner, with pewter plates and black-handled knives and steel forks. The beer had been drawn, and stood in a great brown jug, foaming with a venerably silver head. Ralph observed without astonishment that the plate set for him contained a piece of dry bread, ostentatiously displayed. It was to be his dinner.

This pleasing maiden, Barbara, who regarded the boy with an affection almost as great as her brother's, that is to say, with a malignity quite uncommon, first pointed with her lean and skinny forefinger to the page before her, and read aloud, shaking her head reproachfully:

"As a man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am I not in sport?"

Solomon must surely have had Ralph in his mind.

Then she pointed with the same finger to a door opposite, and said, a smile of satisfaction stealing over her countenance:

"Go to your guardian. Go to receive the wages of sin."

"Those," said Ralph with a light laugh, feeling confidence in his alder-branch, "are not a flogging, on this occasion, but a fight."

Before she heard his words, or had begun to ask herself what they might mean, because she was so full of satisfaction with her texts, he had flung his hat upon a chair, and gone to the next room. If Barbara had been observant, she might have remarked, besides these extraordinary words, a certain brightness of the eyes and setting of the mouth which betokened the spirit of resistance.

The inner room was one occupied and used by Mathew alone. It contained all the papers, account-books, and documents connected with the property and business of the mill. Here, too, was the stone jar already referred to. The decks had been, so to speak, cleared for action, that is to say, the table was thrust into the corner, and upon it lay the sacred instrument with which Mathew loved to correct his ward. This promoter of virtue, or dispenser of consequences, was a strong and supple cane, than which few instruments are more highly gifted with the power of inflicting torture. Ralph knew it well, and had experienced on many occasions the full force of this wholesome quality. He saw it lying ready for use, and he reflected cheerfully that

the alder-branch partly up his left sleeve and partly in his coat-pocket would be more supple, equally heavy, and perhaps more efficacious regarded simply as a pain producer.

When the boy appeared, Mathew rose and removed his wig and coat, because the work before him was likely to make him warm. He then assumed the rod, and ordered Ralph to take off his coat and waistcoat.

"This day," he said, "you have disgraced your family. I design that you shall have such a flogging as you will not readily forget." He then remembered that he would be more free for action without his waistcoat. A man can throw more heart into his work. "Such a flogging," he repeated as he removed it, "as you will remember all your life."

"Well, cousin," said Ralph, "Mr. Carnaby said that the penance was the punishment. I have done the penance."

"Silence, sir! Do you dare to argue with your guardian?" He now began to roll up his shirt-sleeves so as to have his arms quite bare, which is an additional advantage when one wants to put out all one's strength. "I shall flog the flesh off your bones, you young villain!"

But he paused, and for a moment his jaws stuck, and he was speechless, for his cousin, instead of meekly placing himself in position to receive the stupendous flogging intended for him, was facing him, resolution in his eyes, and a weapon in his hands.

"Flogging for flogging, Cousin Mathew," said Ralph; "flesh for flesh. Strip my bones, I strip yours."

Mathew now observed for the first time—it was a most unfortunate moment for making the discovery—that Ralph was a good two inches taller than himself, that his arm was as stout, and that his weapon was of a thickness, length, and pliability which might make the stoutest quail; also he remarked that his shoulders were surprisingly broad, and his legs of length and size quite out of the common. And it even occurred to him that he might have to endure hardness.

"Flesh for flesh," said Ralph, poisoning the alder-branch.

"Villain! Would you break the Fifth Commandment?"

Ralph shook his weapon, making it sing merrily and even thirstily through the air, but made no reply.

"Lay down the switch."

Ralph raised it above his head as one who is preparing to strike.

"Down on your knees, viper, and beg for pardon."

"Flesh for flesh, Mathew," said Ralph.

"You will have it then, young devil. I will kill you!"

Mathew rushed upon his cousin, raining blows as thick as hail upon him. For the moment his weight told and the boy was beaten back. Swish. "Viper!" Swish—swish—'twas a terrible cane. "I will teach you to rebel." Swish—swish—'twas a cane of a suppleness beyond nature. "I will give you a lesson." Swish—swish. "I will break every bone in your body." Swish—the end of the cane found out every soft place—there were not many—upon Ralph's body.

But then the tables were turned, for the boy, recovering from the first confusion, leaped suddenly aside, and with a dexterous movement of the left foot caused his cousin to stumble and fall heavily. He struggled, struck, kicked, and lashed out—but he did not get up again. A very important element in the fight was strangely overlooked by Mathew before he began the attack. It was this, that whereas he was himself out of condition, the boy was in splendid fettle, sound of wind as well as limb. So furious was Mathew's first assault that, brief as was its duration, no sooner was he tripped up than he perceived that his wind was gone, and though he could kick and struggle, yet if he half got up he was quickly knocked down again. And while he kicked and struggled, this young viper, this monster of ingratitude was administering such a punishment as even he, Mathew, had never contemplated for Ralph.

"Have you had enough?" cried the boy at last, out of breath.

"I will murder you, I will— Oh, Lord!" For the punishment began again.

"Stripping of flesh," said Ralph. "This you will remember, cousin, all your life."

The alder-branch was like a flail in the lad's strong arm. The rapidity, the precision, the delicate perception of tender places, took away the sufferer's breath. There was no sound place left in the whole of Mathew's body.

"Have you had enough?" cried Ralph.

"I will flay you alive for this—I will. Oh, oh! I have had enough."

"Then," said Ralph, with one final effort, the effect of which would be, by itself, felt for a week and more, "get up."

Mathew rose, groaning.

"We have had the last of punishments," said the boy. "I will fight you any day you please, but I will take no more punishments from you." He threw down his stick, and put on his coat and waistcoat, with some tenderness however, for the first part of the battle had left its marks.

Now outside, the two women were listening, one with complacency, and the other with pity. And the first was ready with the Bible still open at the Book of Proverbs, which contains quite an armoury of texts good to hurl at a young transgressor. The second, with one ear turned to the door of Mathew's room, went on dishing the beef, which she presently placed upon the table.

There was unusual delay in the sound which generally followed Ralph's visits to that room. No doubt Mathew was commencing with a short Communion Service. Presently, however, there was a great trampling of feet, with the swish, swish of the cane—Mathew's first charge.

"Lord ha' mercy!" cried Prudence.

"The rod and reproof give wisdom," read her mistress from the Book.

Then they heard a heavy fall, followed by a heavier, faster, more determined swishing, hissing, and whistling of the instrument, till the air was resonant with its music, and it was as if all the boys in Northumberland were being caned at once.

"Lord ha' mercy!" repeated Prudence. "He'll murder the boy."

"A reproof," read the other from her place, "'entereth more into a wise man than a hundred stripes into a fool.'"

There was a pause, and then a sound of voices, and then another terrific hailstorm of blows.

Both women looked aghast. Was the punishment never to end?

Then Prudence rushed to the door.

"Mistress," she cried, "you may look on while the boy is cut to pieces—I can't and won't."

She opened the door. Heavens! what a sight was that which met her astonished eyes. The boy, cut and bruised about the face, was standing in the middle of the room, smiling. The man was on his hands and knees, slowly rising; his shirt was torn off his back; his shoulders were cut to pieces; he was covered with weals and bruises; his face, scarred and seamed with Ralph's cruel alder-branch, was dreadful to look upon. He seemed to see nothing; he groaned as he lifted himself up; he staggered where he stood.

Presently he put on his coat with many groans and muttered curses, and Prudence observed that all the while he regarded the lad with looks of the most extreme terror and rage. Presently she began to understand the situation.

"Are you hurt, Master Ralph?" she asked.

"No; but Mathew is," said Ralph.

"Mathew," cried his sister, as the victim of rebellion staggered into the room, "what is this?"

He sank into his armchair with a long deep groan, and made no reply.

"Why, what in the world, Master Ralph?" asked the servant.

But the lad had gone. He went upstairs to his own room; made up a little bundle of things which he wrapped in a handkerchief, picked out the thickest and heaviest of his cudgels, and then returned to the kitchen.

"Give me my dinner," he said.

Barbara had brought out her brother's wig and put it on now, but he still sat silent and motionless. He was in such an agony of pain all over, and his nervous system had sustained so terrible a shock that he could not speak.

"Give me my dinner," Ralph repeated.

Barbara pointed to the crust of bread. She was appalled by this mutiny, but she preserved some presence of mind, and she remembered the bread. Then she sat down again before the Bible and began to read, like a clergyman while the plate goes round.

"It is as sport to the Fool to do mischief."

Prudence, the beef being already served, laid a knife and fork for each.

"A Fool's mouth," Barbara said, as if she was quoting Solomon, "'callesth for roasted beef and a stalled ox. Bread and water until submission and repentance.'"

The young mutineer made no verbal reply. But he dragged the dish before his own plate, and began to carve for himself, largely and generously.

"Mathew!" cried Barbara, springing to her feet.

"Let be—let be," said Mathew; "let the young devil alone. I will be even with him somehow. Let be."

"Not the old way, cousin," replied Ralph with a nod. He then helped himself to about a pint or so of the good old October, and began, his appetite sharpened by exercise, to make the beef disappear in large quantities. Mathew looked on, saying nothing.

The silence terrified his sister. What did it mean? And she perceived, for the first time, that their ward had ceased to be a boy and must henceforth be treated as a man. It was a fearful thought. She shut her Bible and sat back with folded hands, waiting the issue.

In course of time even a hungry boy of seventeen has had enough. Ralph lifted his head at last, took another prolonged pull at the beer, and told Barbara, politely, that he had enjoyed a good dinner.

Then he turned to his cousin and addressed him with a certain solemnity.

"Cousin," he said, "you have always hated me, because my uncle left the mill to me instead of to yourself. Yet you knew from the beginning that his design was for me to have it. I have done you no wrong. You have never lost any opportunity of abusing me before my face and behind my back. You became, unhappily for me, my guardian. You have never neglected any chance of flogging and beating me, if you could find a cause. As regards the ghost business, I was wrong. I deserved punishment, but was it the province of a cousin and a guardian to go and lay information before the Justice of the Peace? I shall be seventeen come next month. In four years this mill and the farm will be my own. But if I remain with you here I can expect nothing but hatred and ill-treatment as far as you dare. You have given me ploughboy's work without a ploughboy's wage, and often without a ploughboy's food. As for flogging, that is finished, because I think you have no more stomach for another fight."

Mathew made no reply whatever, but sat with his head upon his hands, breathing heavily.

"I am tired of ill-treatment," Ralph went on, "and I shall go away."

"Whither, boy?" asked Barbara.

"I know not yet. I go to seek my fortune."

"Go, if you will," said Mathew; "go, in the devil's name; go, whither you are bound to go: long before four years are over you will be hanging in chains."

Ralph laughed and took up his bundle.

"Farewell, Prudence," he said, "thou wast ever kind to me."

The woman threw her arms about his neck and kissed him with tears, and prayed that the Lord might bless him. And as he walked forth from the house the voice of Barbara followed him, saying:

"'A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the Fool's back.'"

The Fugleman was sitting in the sun before his door in the castle, smoking a pipe and inclined to be drowsy, when Ralph appeared with his startling news.

As regards the flogging, the old soldier made light of it. Nothing can be done in the army without the cat. Had not he himself once received three hundred all by a mistake, because they were meant for another man, who escaped. Did he therefore bear malice against his commanding officer? No. But the villainy of Mathew, first to lay information and then to make an excuse for a flogging just for pleasure, and to gratify his own selfish desire to be continually flogging, why, that justified the mutiny. As for the details of the fight, he blamed severely the inexperience in strategy shown by first knocking down the enemy. He should have expected better things of Ralph, whose true policy would have been to harass and annoy his adversary by feints, dodges, and unexpected skirmishes. This would not only have fatigued him, but, considering his shortness of breath, would have worn him out so that he would in the end have fallen an easy prey, and been cudgelled without resistance till there was not a sound place left. Besides, it would have made the fight more interesting, considered as a work of art.

However, doubtless the next time—but then he remembered that the boy was going away.

"To seek my fortune, Fugleman," Ralph said gaily. "Look after Drusy for me, while I am away."

"Aye—aye," the Fugleman replied, "she shall come to no harm. And as for money, Master Ralph?"

"I've got a guinea," he replied, "which my uncle gave me three years ago."

"A guinea won't go far. Stay, Master Ralph." He went into his room and came back with a stocking in his hand. "Here's all I've got, boy. It is twenty guineas. Take it all. I shall do very well. Lord! what with the rabbits and the pheasants——"

"Nay," said Ralph, "I will not take your savings neither."

But, presently, being pressed, he consented to take ten guineas on the understanding that when he came back (his fortune made) the Fugleman was to receive twenty. And then they parted with a mighty hand-shake.

Half-way down the street Ralph passed Sailor Nan, who was sitting on a great stone beside her door, smoking her short black pipe.

"Whither bound, my lad?" she asked.

"I am bound to London," he replied.

"I am off to seek my fortune."

"Come here, I will read thy fortune."

Like most old women, Nan could read a lad's fortune in the lines of his hand, or by the cards, or by the peeling of an apple.

"A good cruise," she said, "with fair wind aft and good weather for the most part. But storms belike on leaving port. There's a villain, and fighting, and foreign parts, and gold, and a good wife. Go thy ways, lad. Art no poor puss-faced swab to fear fair fighting. Go thy ways. Take and give. Trust not too many. And stand by all old shipmets. Go thy ways."

He laughed and left her. Yet he was cheered by her kindly prophecy.

He crossed the old bridge and presently found himself outside the green palings of Dame Hetherington's house. The girl who had joined him in church was in the garden. He whistled and she came running.

"I am come to say good-bye, Drusy," he said; "I am running away."

"Oh, Ralph, whither? And you have a cruel blow upon your face."

"I have fought Mathew," he said, "and I have beaten him. This scar upon my face is nothing compared with the scars over his. I believe he is one large bruise. But I can no longer endure his ill-treatment and Barbara's continual reproaches. Therefore I am resolved to remain no longer, but shall go to London, there to seek my fortune as thy father did, Drusy."

They talked for half an hour, she trying to persuade him to stay, and he resolved to go. Then he went with her into the house, where he must needs tell all the story to Dame Hetherington, who scolded him, and bade him get home again and make submission, but he would not.

Then Drusilla remembered that her father would gladly aid any lad from Northumberland, and sat down and wrote a letter very quickly, being dexterous with her pen, and gave it to Ralph to carry.

"You will find him," she said, "at the sign of the Leg and Star in Cheapside. Forget not that address. Stay, I will write it outside the letter. Give it him with my respect and obedience. Oh, Ralph, shall you be long before you have found your fortune and are back to us?"

"Nay," said Ralph, "I know not what may be my fortune. I go to find it, like many a lad of old."

Then after many fond farewells Ralph kissed her and trudged away manfully, while Drusy leaned her head over the garden-gate and wept and sobbed, and could not be consoled.

CHAPTER III. HOW RALPH SOUGHT FORTUNE.

A YOUNG man's walk from Warkworth all the way to London cannot fail to be full of interest and adventure. There is, however, no space here to tell of the many adventures which befell this lad upon his journey. As for bad roads, he might have expected them, except that he was young and ignorant and expected nothing, so that each moment brought him some surprise, and each day taught him some new experience. As for the people to be met upon the roads, probably, had he known what to expect, he would have stopped short and sought fortune at Newcastle, Durham, or York, rather than have pressed on to London. But he was brave and full of hope. As to the roadside inns and the bedroom companions, he was astonished afterwards that he managed to get through all without having his weasand cut for the sake of his scanty stock of guineas, so desperate were some of the villains whom he encountered. Nevertheless, even among the most desperate of rogues, there is hesitation about murder, and even about robbing lads and persons of tender years.

He stowed away his money within his waistcoat, keeping in his pocket nothing but two or three shillings for the daily wants; yet it seemed as if every man that he met had sinister designs upon him. If it was a solitary gipsy lying on the grass by the wayside, he rose to meet the boy as he went by, and looked highway robbery with resolution, yet refrained when he met equal resolution in the eyes of the wayfarer, and a stout stick in strong hands, and broad shoulders. If it was a pair of soldiers on the way to join their regiment, they stopped him, being two brave and gallant dare-devil heroes, and recommended the turning out of pockets, or else—— They swore terribly, these brave fellows, but a back-hander right and left with the cudgel, and then a light pair of heels, relieved the wayfarer of this danger, and left the heroes swearing more terribly than before, and lamenting the waste of good front teeth.

When he got near Durham he fell upon a party of pitmen out of work, and therefore parading the road, which is the manner of pitmen, one knows not what for except for mischief. These gentlemen of the underground, who have neither religion nor education, and are, in fact, more savage and heartless than North-American savages, began to set upon the boy out of pure sport, as if they felt that somebody must be damaged in order to keep up their own spirits. They handled him roughly, not for the sake of robbing him, but because he was young and unprotected, just as on Sundays they throw at cocks; and it would have gone badly with him but for one among them who seemed to be a leader, and with many frightful imprecations bade his fellows let the boy alone. So they went on their godless way and he went his, not much the worse for a roll in the dust.

As for the mounted highwaymen, they passed him or met him, riding in splendour, and scorned to fly at such small game as a country boy walking along the road. Substantial farmers riding home from market and tradesmen with money in their pockets were their prey. But Ralph met them in the evenings at the country inns, where they hardly pretended to disguise their profession, and bragged and swaggered among the admiring rustics over their punch, as if there were no such things as gallows and rope.

Worse than the highwayman was the common foot-pad, the cowardly and sneaking villain who would rob a little child of a sixpence—aye, and murder it afterwards to prevent discovery, and feel no remorse. When these road vagabonds accosted the boy it was with intent to rob him, even of the coat upon his back; whereupon he either fought or else ran away. He fought so bravely with so stout a heart and so handy a cudgel, and he ran so fast, that he came to no harm; more than that, he left behind him on the road half-a-score desperadoes at least, who bore upon their gloomy countenances for life the marks of his cudgel, and swore to have his blood whenever they might meet with him again.

The road was not, however, a long field of battle for the lad, like his Progress to Christian the Pilgrim, nor did he meet with Apollyon anywhere. There were waggoners to talk with, friendly hawkers, whom the people call muggers, and faws, or tinkers, who are too often robbers and

pilferers; also farmers, their wives and daughters, cattle-drovers, carriers, honest sailors, who would scorn to rob upon the highway, on their way to join ship, and pleasant little country towns every eight or ten miles, where one could rest and talk, and drink a tankard of cool small beer. Then, as it was early summer, when there are fairs going on in many places, the roads in some parts were full of the caravans and the show-people, whom Ralph found not only a curious and interesting folk, but also friendly, and inclined to conversation with a stranger who was not a rival; who was ready to offer a tankard; who admired without stint or envy the precious things they had to show, and who watched with delight unbounded and belief profound, the curious tricks, arts, artifices, and accomplishments by which they secured a precarious livelihood. In this way Ralph was so fortunate as to make personal acquaintance with the Pig-faced Lady, the Two-headed Calf, the Bous Potamos or Amphibious Beef (stuffed, but a most prodigious monster), and the Italian who played the pipe with his hands, the cymbals with his elbow, the triangle with his knees, and the bells with his head, while he made a most ingenious set of fantoccini dance with his right foot. All this the wonderful Italian would do, and he was not proud. Then there was the accomplished Posture Master, who had no joints at all in any of his limbs, but only flexible hinges turning every way, and could put arms, legs, head, fingers, and toes in any position he pleased. He had a monkey who had been taught to imitate him, but with stiffness. Ralph also was presented to an Albino or Nyctalope, a most illustrious lady, with hair a silvery white, and skin of incomparable clearness, but uncertain of temper; there were the wrestlers, boxers, and quarter-staff players, honest fellows and staunch drinkers, who went round from fair to fair to display their skill, fight with each other like Roman gladiators, and pick up the prizes; there were the conjurors and magicians, who palmed things wherever they pleased as if they were helped by a devil or two; the seventh son, who read the future for all comers, and whose boast was that he was never wrong; the bear-leaders and badger-baiters; the flyer through the air, who made nothing of descending from a steeple-top on a rope with fireworks on his hands and feet; the dancers on the tight or slack rope; the thrower of

somersaults; the itinerant cock-fighter, who would fight his cock against all comers for a guinea a side; the horse-dealer; the quack doctor, and his Merry-Andrew; the pedlar with his pack; the cheap book-seller, and the ballad-crier, with many more of the great tribe of wanderers. Ralph walked with them along the road, and heard their stories. He also learned some of the strange language in which they talk to each other when minded not to be understood by the bystanders.

When they came to their destination, and set up their canvas booths, he stayed too, and enjoyed the fun of the fair. At seventeen there is plenty of time to make your fortune, and why grudge a few days spent in watching the humours of a country fair? To be sure it cost some money, but he had still a good many of his guineas left, and no one could think a shilling or two ill-spent if one could see Pizarro acted in the most enthralling manner, or hear the most charming singer in the whole world, dainty with ribbons, and a saucy straw hat, sing, "Tis a Pretty Little Heart," or "Ben Bowsprit," or "Ned, You've no Call to Me." Besides, there were the sports. Ralph played the cudgels one day and got a broken head, and won a "plain hat, worth sixteen shillings," but no one would give him more than four shillings and twopence for it; also he tried a fall, but was thrown by one mightier than himself in the Cumberland back-stroke; and he bowled for a cheese but did not win; and he longed to run in a sack but thought it beneath the dignity of a full-grown man. Also, there were lotteries; you could put in and draw everywhere all day long; there were prizes of sixpence, and prizes of ten pounds; he put in; sometimes he won, but oftener he lost, which is generally the way with sportsmen and those who wait upon the Goddess of Chance. At this Capua, or Paradise of Pleasures, which was then, and is still, called Grantham, Ralph had well-nigh taken a step which would have made his story much less interesting to us, though perhaps fuller of incident. For he made acquaintance—being a youth of innocent heart, and apt to believe in the honesty and virtue of everybody—with the company of players. Now it happened, first, that the troop were sadly in want of a young actor, if only to play up to the manager's daughter; and secondly, that this young lady, who was as beautiful as the day and as vivacious as Mrs. Brace-

girdle (she afterwards became a most famous London actress, and married an aged earl), cast eyes of favour on the handsome lad, longed very much for him to play Romeo to her Juliet, or Othello to her Desdemona, or any other part in which the beauty of a handsome woman is set off by the beauty of a handsome fellow, a thing which very few actresses can understand: they think, which is a great mistake, that it is better for them to be the only well-favoured creature on the stage. Wherefore the manager took Ralph aside privately, and offered him refreshment, either ale, or rumbo, or Barbadoes water, with tobacco if he chose, and had serious conversation with him, providing all his victuals and those as abundant as the treasury would allow, and a salary—say five shillings a week, to begin in a few months, as soon as he had learned to act, and to teach him the rudiments; and the honour and glory of playing principal parts; and his own daughter to play up to; and a possible prospect of appearing at Drury Lane.

It was a tempting offer; the stage—even the stage in a barn—seemed splendid to the lad; the voice and manner of the manager were seductive; more seductive still was the voice of his daughter. When she lifted her great eyes and met his he trembled and could not say her nay; when she laid her pretty hand upon his, and begged him to stay with them and be her Romeo, what could he reply? Yet he remembered in time that he was on his way to seek his fortune; that the troop were obviously out at elbows, all horribly poor, and apparently badly fed; that to fall in love with an actress was not the beginning he had contemplated; and that Drusy, for her part, would certainly not consider a strolling-actor's life as the most honourable in the world. He took a resolution: he would think no more upon those limpid eyes; he hardened his heart; he would fly. He did fly; but not before the young actress, who was already beyond his own age, and ought to have known better, had laid her arms round his neck and kissed farewell, with many tears, to her first love who would not love her in return. But her father was not displeased, and said, speaking more from a business point of view than out of paternal tenderness, that she would act the better for the little disappointment, and that it does them good, when they are young, to feel something of what they

are always pretending. Said it put backbone into their attitudes and real tears in their eyes. Nothing on the stage so difficult as real tears, except a blush, which cannot be had for love or money.

Thus it happened that it was four or five weeks before Ralph got to London.

He arrived by way of Highgate. He reached the top of Highgate Hill at four in the afternoon. Here he sat down to rest, and to look upon the city he had come so far to see. There had been rain, but the clouds had blown over, leaving a blue sky, and a bright sun, and a clear air. He saw in the distance the towers and steeples of London; his long journey was done; the fortune he came to seek was—where was it? All the long way from Warkworth it seemed to him that when he reached London he would immediately find that thing known as fortune in some visible and tangible form, waiting to be seized by his strong young hands. Yet now that he saw before him the City of the Golden Pavement it seemed as if, perhaps—it was a chilling thought—he might not know or recognise, or be able to seize this fortune when he actually saw it. What is it like—Good Fortune? In other words he began for the first time to experience the coldness of doubt which sometimes falls upon the stoutest of us. His cheek was by this time burned a deeper brown; his hands were dyed and tanned by the June sun; his coat and waistcoat were stained with travel and with rain; his shoes were worn through the soles; in his pocket jingled the last two of his eleven guineas. When they were gone, he reflected with dismay, what would have to be done? But it was not a time to sit and think. Every fortune must have its beginning; every young adventurer must make a start; every Dick Whittington must enter the City of London. He rose, seized his bundle, and set off down the hill, singing to keep up his spirits, with as much alacrity as if he were only just starting on his way from Warkworth, and as if his heart was still warmed by the recollection of his cousin's bruises.

The way from Highgate to London lies along a pleasant road between tall hedges. On either side are fields and woods, and here and there a gentleman's seat or the country box of a successful citizen. Presently the boy reached Highbury, where the road bends south, and he passed Islington, with its old church and its

narrow shady lanes thick with trees. On his right he saw a great crowd in a garden, and there was music. This was Sadler's Wells. Soon after this he arrived at Clerkenwell Green, and so by a maze of streets, not knowing whither he went, to Smithfield, where he found himself in the midst of the crowd which fills all the streets of the city from dawn till night. Such a crowd, men so rough, he had never seen before. They seemed to take pleasure in jestling and hustling each other as they went along. It gave occasion for profane oaths, strange threats, the exhibition of courage, and the provocation of fear. If they carried loads they went straight ahead, caring nothing who was in the way. Some were fighting, some were swearing, some were walking leisurely, some were hastening along as if there was not a moment to be lost. There were open shops along one side; on another side was a great building, but what it was Ralph knew not. The broad open space was covered with pens and hurdles for cattle, and at the corners were booths and carts from which all kinds of things were sold. A man in a long black gown, with a tall hat and a venerable white beard, stood upon a platform in one place, a clown beside him, holding something in his hand and bawling lustily. When he was silent the clown turned somersaults. Ralph drew nearer and listened. He was selling a magic balsam which cured wounds as well as diseases. "Only yesterday, gentlemen," the quack was saying, "at four in the afternoon, a young nobleman was brought to me run through the body. He bought the balsam, gentlemen, and is already recovered, though weak from loss of blood." "Buy! buy! buy!" shouted the clown. The people looked on, laughed, and went their way. Yet some stayed and bought a box of the precious ointment. Then there was a woman selling gin from a firkin or small cask on a cart. Her customers sat upon a stool and drank this dreadful stuff, which, as the ingenious Hogarth has shown, makes their cheeks pale and their eyes dull. And there was a stall in which well-dressed city ladies sat eating sweetmeats, march pane, and China oranges, while outside stood a cow, and a woman beside her crying, "A can of milk, ladies! A can of red cow's milk!" The boy looked about here a while, and passed on, wondering what great holiday was going. He knew not where he was, but that he was in London town. He was to find

the sign of the Leg and Star in Cheapside. Perhaps he would see it as he walked along. If not, he would ask. Meantime the novelty of the crowd and the noise of the streets pleased him, and he walked slowly with the rest. He would wait until there passed some gentleman of grave appearance of whom he could ask the way. But he was in no hurry. He went on, and although he knew not where he was, he walked through Giltspur Street, past Cock Lane (where afterwards appeared the ghost). On his left he saw Newgate, and so through Great Old Bailey to Ludgate Hill, where, indeed, for the magnificence of the people and the splendour of the shops he was indeed astonished. There were few of the rude jostling people here. Most were gentlemen in powdered wigs, ruffles, and gold-headed canes, being the better class of citizens taking the air in the evening before supper, or ladies in hoops and silks, with gold chains, fans, and gloves, walking with their husbands or their lovers, very beautiful to behold. The shops, not yet shut for the day, had all sorts of signs swinging from the wall. There were the *Frying Pan and Drum*, the *Hog in Armour*, the *Bible and Swan*, the *Whale and Crow*, the *Shovel and Boot*, the *Razor and Strop*, the *Axe and Bottle*, the *Spanish Galleon*, the *Catherine Wheel*, and a hundred others. But he saw not the sign of the Leg and Star.

It was growing late. The boy was hungry and tired. He looked in at a coffee-house, but the company within, the crowds of fine gentlemen—some drinking coffee, wine, and brandy, and some smoking pipes—and the gaily-dressed young women who stood behind the counter, frightened him. He did not dare go in and call for a cup of coffee; besides, he had never tasted coffee. Then he passed a barber's shop, and thought he might ask of the barber, because at Warkworth the barber was everybody's friend, and perhaps this city barber might take after so good an example. He looked in at the open door, but quickly retreated. For within the shop were two or three gentlemen in the hands of the apprentices; and one, whose bald head was wrapped in a handkerchief, was singing some song which began, "Happy is the child whose father has gone to the devil," while the barber himself, with an apron on and a white nightcap, sat in a chair playing an accompaniment on a kind of guitar. So Ralph went on his way, wondering what

next he should see in London, and where this fortune of his might be found. Presently there came slowly along the street a venerable gentleman in an ample wig and a full black gown. He seemed to have a benevolent countenance. Ralph stopped him, and, pulling off his hat, ventured to ask this reverend divine if he would condescend to tell him the shortest way to the sign of the Leg and Star in Cheapside.

"Stay, young man," said the clergyman; "I am somewhat hard of hearing."

He pulled out and adjusted very slowly an ear-trumpet, into which Ralph bellowed his question. His reverence then removed the instrument, replaced it in his pocket, and shook his finger at the boy.

"So young," he said, "yet already corrupted! Boy, bethink thee that Newgate is but in the next street."

With these words he went on his way, and left the lad greatly perplexed and humbled, and wondering what it was that he was supposed to have said.

It was, in short, seven of the clock when he found himself at the place whither he was bound. He had been wandering for an hour and a half, looking about him, and at last ventured to ask the way of a servant-girl, who seemed astonished that he should not know so simple a thing as the most expeditious road to Cheapside, seeing that it was only the other side of Paul's. But she told him, and he presently found himself in the broad and wealthy street called Cheapside.

The Leg and Star was on the south side, between Bread Street and Bow Church. It was a glover's shop, and because it was growing late, the boxes of gloves were now taken from the window, and the apprentices were putting all away. Ralph stopped and looked at the sign, then at the letter—which was not a little crumpled and travel-stained—and again at the sign. Yes, it must be the house, the sign of the Leg and Star, in Cheapside.

At the door of the shop stood a tall and portly man, between fifty and sixty years of age, with large red cheeks and double chin. He was dressed in plain broadcloth and tye-wig, but he wore ruffles and neck-cloth of fine white linen laced, as became a substantial citizen. Ralph knew it could be none other than Mr. Hetherington, wherefore he took off his hat and bowed low.

"What is thy business, young man?" asked the master glover.

"Sir, I bear a letter from your honour's

daughter, now staying at Warkworth, in Northumberland."

"My daughter! Then, prithee, boy, who are you?"

"My name is Ralph Embleton, and——"

"Thou art the son, then, of my old friend, Jack Embleton? Come in, lad, come in." He seized the boy by the arm and dragged him into the house and across the shop to the sitting-room at the back. "Wife! wife!" he cried. "Here is a messenger from Drusy with a letter. Give me the letter, boy. And this is young Ralph Embleton, son of my old friend and gossip, Jack Embleton, with whom I have had many a fight in the old days. Poor Jack! poor Jack! Well, we live. Let us be thankful. Make the boy welcome; give him supper. Make him a bed somewhere. What art thou doing in this great place, lad? So the letter—aye! the letter."

He read the superscription, and slowly opened it and began to read:

"DEAR AND HON'D PARENTS,—The bairn of this is Rafe, who has run away from cruell treetment, and wants to make his fortune in London. He will tell you that I am well, and that I pray for your helthe, and that you will be kind to Rafe. —Your loving and dutiful d'ter,

"DRUSILLA."

"So," went on the merchant, "cruel treatment. Who hath cruelly ill-treated thee, boy?"

"I have run away, sir," he said, "from my cousin, Mathew Humble, because he seeks every opportunity to do me a mischief. And, since he is my guardian, there is no remedy but to endure or to run away."

"Ah! Mathew Humble, who bought my farm. Sam Embleton married his father's sister. Did your Uncle Sam leave Morwick Mill to Mathew?"

"No, sir; he left it to me."

"And Mathew is your guardian? Yet the mill is your own, and you have run away from your own property? Morwick Mill is a pretty estate. It likes me not. Yet you would fain seek your fortune in London. That is well. Fortune, my lad, is only to be made by men of resolute hearts, like me." He expanded as he spoke, and seemed to grow two feet higher and broad in proportion. "And strong arms, like mine"—he hammered his chest as if it had been an anvil—"and keen eyes, like mine. Weak men fail and get

trampled on in London. Cowardly men get set on one side, while the strong and the brave march on. I shall be, without doubt, next year, a Common Councilman. Strong men, clever men, brave men, boy, march, I say, from honour to greater honour. I shall become Alderman in two or three years, if Providence so disposes. There is no limit to the exalted ambitions of the London citizen. You would climb like me. You would be, some day, my Lord Mayor. It is well. It does you credit. It is a noble ambition."

Meantime a maid had been spreading the table with supper, and, to say the truth, the eyes of the boy were turned upon the cold meats with so visible a longing, that the merchant could not choose but observe his hunger. So he bade him sit and eat. Now, while Ralph devoured his supper, being at the moment one of the hungriest lads in all England, the honest glover went on talking in grand, if not boastful language, about himself and his great doings. Yet, inexperienced as he was, Ralph could not but wonder, because, although the merchant was certainly past fifty years of age, the great things were all in the future. He would become one of the richest merchants in London; he would be Lord Mayor; he would make his daughter a great heiress; he designed that she should marry a lord at least. At this announcement Ralph blushed and his heart sank. One of the reasons, said the merchant, why he kept her still in Northumberland was that he did not wish her to return home until they were removed to a certain great house which he had in his mind, but had not yet purchased. She should go in silk and satin; he would give such great entertainments that even the king should hear of them; London was ever the city for noble feasting. And so he talked, until the lad's brain reeled for thinking of all these splendours, and he grew sad in thinking how far off Drusilla would be as, one by one, all these grandeurs became achieved.

Another thing he observed: that while the husband talked in his confident and braggart way, the wife, who was a thin woman, sat silent and sometimes sighed. Why did she sigh? Did she want to live on in obscurity? Had she no ambition?

Then the merchant filled and lit a pipe of tobacco, and proceeded to tell Ralph how he would have to begin upon this ambitious career in search of fortune. First, he would have to be an apprentice.

"I was myself," said Mr. Hetherington, "an apprentice, though who would think it now?" As an apprentice he would sweep and clean out the shop, open it in the morning, and shut it at night, wait upon the customers all day, run errands, obey dutifully his master, learn the business, watch his master's interests, behave with respect to his betters, show zeal in the despatch of work, get no holidays or play-time, never see the green fields except on Good Fridays, take for meals what might be given him, which would certainly not be slices off the sirloin, and sleep under the counter at night. In short, the shop would be his work-room, his parlour, his eating-room, and his bed-room.

The boy listened to his instructions with dismay. Was this the road to fortune? Was he to become a slave for some years? But—after? His apprenticeship finished, it appeared that he might, if he could find money, open a shop, and become a master. But most young men, he learned, found it necessary to remain in the employment of their masters for some years, and in some cases for the whole term of their natural lives.

He did not consider that he had already such a fortune as would, if laid out with judgment, enable him to open a shop or to buy a partnership. He forgot at the time that he was the owner of Morwick Mill. It seemed to him, being so young and inexperienced, that he had run away from his inheritance, and abandoned it to Mathew. He, too, might therefore have to remain in a master's employment. This was fine fortune, truly, to be a servant all your days. And the boy began already even to regret his Cousin Mathew's blows and Barbara's cruel tongue.

His pipe finished, the merchant remembered that at eight his club would meet, and therefore left the lad with his wife.

"Boy," she leaned over the table and whispered eagerly as soon as her husband was gone, "have you come up to London without money to become a merchant?"

"Indeed, madam," he replied, "I know not what I may become."

"Then fly," she said; "go home again. Follow the plough, become a tinker, a tailor, a cobbler—anything that is honest. Trade is uncertain. For one who succeeds a dozen are broke; you know not, any moment, but that you also may break. Your fortune hangs upon a hundred chances. Alas! if one of these fail, there is the

Fleet, or may be Newgate, or Marshalsea, or Whitecross Street, or the King's Bench, or the Clink—there are plenty of places for the bestowal of poor debtors—for yourself, and for your wife and innocent children ruin and starvation."

"Yet," said Ralph, "Mr. Hetherington is not anxious."

"He leaves anxiety," she replied bitterly, "to his wife."

Then she became silent, and spoke no more to the boy, but sat with her lips working as one who conversed with herself. And from time to time she sighed as if her heart was breaking.

In the morning the merchant was up betimes, and began again upon the glories of the city.

"Art still of the same mind?" he asked. "Wilt thou be like Whittington and Gresham, and me, also one of those who climb the tree?"

Then Ralph confessed with a blush—which mattered nothing, so deep was the ruddy brown upon his cheek—that he found city honours dearly bought at the price of so much labour and confinement.

"Then," said his adviser in less friendly tones, "what will you do?"

Ralph asked if there was nothing that a young man may do besides work at a trade or sit in a shop.

"Why, truly, yes," Mr. Hetherington replied with severity; "he may become a highwayman, and rob upon the road, taking their money from honest tradesmen and poor farmers—a gallant life indeed, and so he will presently hang in chains, or be anatomised and set up in Surgeon's Hall. There is the end of your fresh air for you."

"But, with respect, sir," Ralph persisted, "I mean in an honest way."

"If he is rich enough he may be a scholar of Cambridge, and so take orders, or he may become a physician, or a lawyer, or a schoolmaster, or a surgeon, and go to sea in His Majesty's ships and lead a dog's life, or a soldier and go a fighting—"

"Let me be a soldier," cried the boy.

"Why, why? But you must first get His Majesty's commission, and to get this you must beg for letters to my Lord This and my Lord That, and dangle about great houses, praying for their influence, and bribe the lacqueys, and then perhaps never get your commission after all."

This was discouraging.

"Rolling stones, lad," said the great merchant, "gather no moss. Better stand

quiet behind the counter, sweep out shop, serve customers, and keep accounts, and perhaps some day be partner and grow rich."

But Ralph hung his head.

"Then how can I help thee, foolish boy? Yet, because I knew thy father, and for Drusy's sake— Stay, would you go to India?"

To India! Little, indeed, of the great doings in India reached the town of Warkworth. Yet Ralph had heard the Vicar talking with Mr. Carnaby of Colonel Clive and the famous battle of Plassy. To India! His eye flashed.

"Yes, sir; I would willingly go to India."

"My worthy friend, Mr. Nathaniel Silvertop, is in the service of the Company. Come, let us seek his counsel."

They walked, the boy being much astonished at the crowd, the noise, and the never ceasing business of the streets, down Cheapside, through the Poultry, past the new Mansion House and the Royal Exchange, into Cornhill, where stands the Honourable East India Company's house, a plain solid building, adorned with pillars of the Doric order. Mr. Hetherington led the way into a great hall, where was already assembled a crowd of men who had favours to ask of the directors, and finding a servant he sent his name to Mr. Silvertop.

Presently, for nothing was done in undignified haste in this house, Mr. Silvertop himself—a gentleman of three score, and of grave appearance—descended the stairs. To him Mr. Hetherington unfolded his business.

Here, he said, was a young fellow from Northumberland, heir to a small and pretty estate, but encumbered for three or four years to come with a guardian, whose affection he appeared to have unfortunately lost, so that it would be well for both to remain apart; but he was a young gentleman of roving tastes, who would fain see a little of the world, and—but this he whispered—a brave and bold fellow.

Mr. Silvertop regarded the lad attentively.

"Our writers," he said solemnly, "go out on small salaries. They seldom rise above four hundred or five hundred pounds a year at the most. Yet—mark this, young gentleman—so great are their chances in India that they sometimes come home at forty, or even less, with a hundred—aye, two hundred thousand pounds. Think

upon that, boy! So great a thing it is to serve this Honourable Company."

The boy's eyes showed no emotion. A dull dog, indeed, he seemed to Mr. Silvertop, not to tremble at the mere mention of so vast a sum.

"Leave him here, my good friend," said Mr. Silvertop. "I have business, but I will return and speak with him again. He can walk in the hall and wait."

Mr. Hetherington went his way, and Ralph waited.

After an hour or so, he saw Mr. Silvertop coming down the stairs again. He was escorting, or leading to the door, or in some way behaving in respectful and deferential fashion to a tall and splendid gentleman, brave in scarlet, wearing a sash and a sword and a gold-laced hat. At the foot of the stairs, Mr. Silvertop bowed low to this gentleman, who joined a little group of gentlemen, some of them also in scarlet. He seemed to be the chief among them, for they all behaved to him with the greatest respect. Then Mr. Silvertop looked about in the crowd, and spying Ralph, beckoned him to draw near and speak with him.

"So," said Mr. Silvertop, "you are the lad. Yes, I remember." Ralph thought it strange that he should not remember, seeing that it was but an hour or so since Mr. Silvertop had spoken last with him. "You are recommended by my friend Mr. Hetherington. Well, I know not—we are pestered with applications for our writerships. Every runaway"—Ralph blushed—"every out-at-elbows younger son"—the great gentleman in scarlet, who was close at hand, here turned his head and looked at the lad with a little interest—"every poor curate's brat who can read and cypher wants to be sent to India."

"You cannot, sir," said the gentleman in scarlet, "send too many Englishmen to India. I would that the whole country was ruled by Englishmen—yet not by quill-drivers."

He added the last words in a lower voice, yet Ralph heard them.

Mr. Silvertop bowed low, and turned again to the boy.

"A writership," he continued, "is the greatest gift that can be bestowed upon a deserving lad. Remember that, and if—but I cannot promise. I would oblige my friend if I could—but I will not undertake anything. With my influence—yet I do not say for certain; a writership is a greater matter than you seem to think—I might bring thy case before the directors. Is thy

handwriting fair, and thy knowledge of figures absolute?"

Ralph blushed, because his handwriting was short of the clerly standard.

"I thank you, sir," he said, "but I love not writing. I would rather carry a sword than a pen."

"Ta-ta-ta," replied Mr. Silvertop, whose influence lay wholly in the mercantile department of the company. "We waste our time. A sword! I know naught of swords. Go thy ways, boy—go thy ways. Is London City, think you, a place for the carriage of swords? Go, take the king's shilling, and join a marching regiment. I warrant you enough of swords and bayonets."

Ralph bowed and turned away sadly. The gentleman in scarlet, who had apparently been listening to the conversation, followed him to the doors with thoughtful eyes.

"A lad who would rather handle a sword than a pen," he said. "Are there many such lads left in this city of trade and greed?"

They looked, at the Leg and Star, that day, for the return of the young Northumbrian in time for dinner. But he came not; nor did he come at night; nor did he ever come. No one knew whither he had gone or what had become of him, and much Mr. Hetherington feared that in this wicked town he had been enticed by some designing wretch to his destruction.

CHAPTER IV. DRUSILLA'S STORY.

I WAS born in Cheapside, almost beneath the bells of Bow, on October the fifth, in the year of grace seventeen hundred and fifty-three, being the fifth and youngest child of Solomon Hetherington and Prudence his wife. My father was a citizen and glover, a member of the Honourable Company of Glovers, his ambition being always to be elected, before becoming Lord Mayor, Master of his Company. These ambitions are laudable in a city merchant, yet, alas! they are not always attained, and in my unhappy father's case they were very far from being reached, as you shall presently hear.

There is, I am told, some quality in the London air which causeth the city, in spite of much that is foolish as regards cleanliness, to be a healthy place, and favourable to children. So that, for my own part, though I was brought up in the very centre and heart of the city, with no green fields

to run in, nor any gardens save those belonging to the Drapers' Company, I, as well as my brothers and sisters, was a healthy and well-faring child up to the age of eight, when I, with all my brothers and sisters, was afflicted with that scourge of mankind, small-pox. This dreadful disease, to the unspeakable grief of my parents, killed their four eldest children, and spared none but myself, the youngest, and a girl. To lose three strong and promising boys, the hope of the house, as well as a girl of fourteen, already beginning to be useful, was a most dreadful thing, and I wonder that my mother, who passionately loved her boys, ever recovered cheerfulness. Indeed, until her dying day she kept the annual recurrence of this day, which robbed her of her children—for they all died on the same day—in prayer and fasting and tears. Yet I was left, and, by further blessing of Heaven, I recovered so far that, although I was weakly and ailing for a long time, I was not marked by a single spot or any of those ugly pits, which sometimes ruin many a woman's beauty and thereby rob her of that choicest blessing, the love of a husband. So different, however, was I from the stout and hearty girl before the small-pox, that my parents were advised that the best chance to save my life—this being for the time their chief and even their only hope—was to send me into the country, there to live in fresh pure air, running in the sun, and fed on oatmeal porridge, good milk, fat bacon, and new-laid eggs.

Then my father bethought him of his own mother who lived far away indeed from London, namely at Warkworth, in Northumberland. And he proposed to my mother that they should take this long journey, carrying me with them, and leave me for a while in charge of my grandmother; which being done, and my health showing signs of amendment, they were constrained to go back to their own business, leaving me in good hands, yet with sorrowful hearts, because they were going home without me. And for six or seven years I saw them no more.

No girl, to be sure, had kinder treatment or more indulgent governess than myself. My grandmother, Dame Hetherington—though not a lady by birth, but only a farmer's daughter—lived in the house which stands outside the town, beyond the bridge, among the trees. You may know it by its garden and green railings. It is a small house, yet large enough for the uses

and wants of an old lady and a single serving-maid. She was then about seventy years of age, but this is considered young in Northumberland, and I have seen many ladies from London and the south country, or even out of Scotland, who at fifty were not so active. She lived upon an annuity, forty pounds a year, which her son bought for her when he sold his father's farm of thirty acres; it was bought by Mathew Humble. As for the cottage, it was also my father's, and the Dame lived in it, rent free.

It was the Dame, my grandmother, who taught me all household things, such as to spin, to sew, to darn, to hem, to knit, to embroider, to bake and brew, to make puddings, cakes, jellies, and preserves, to compound skilfully cowslip, ginger, and gooseberry wine; to clean, sweep, dust, and keep in order my own and all the other rooms in the house. It was the Vicar's wife who undertook—there being no school in the town, save a humble Dame's School—to teach me reading, writing, cyphering, together with my Catechism and the Great Scheme of Christian Redemption, of which, being the daughter of pious parents, I already possessed the rudiments. There were not many books to read in the house, because my grandmother did not read; but there were the Bible, the Apocrypha, the Pilgrim's Progress, a book of Hymns and Pious Songs, and a bundle of the cheap books which tell of Valentine and Orson, Dick Whittington, the last Appearance of the Devil, and the latest Examples of Divine Wrath against fools and profligates.

But because the Dame, my grandmother, was a wise woman, and reflected that I was sent away from London in order to recover my health and grow strong, I was allowed and encouraged to run about in the open air as much as possible, so that, as this part of England is quite safe, and there are here few gipsies (who mostly stay on the other side of Cheviot) nor any robbers on the road—nor, indeed, any road at all to signify—I very soon grew to know the whole country within the reach of a hearty girl's feet.

There is plenty to see, though this part of Northumberland is flat, while the rest is wild and mountainous. Firstly, there are the ruins of the old castle, about which it is always pleasant for a child to run and climb, or for a grown person to meditate on the vanity of earthly things, seeing that this pile of ruins was once a great and

stately castle, and this green sward was once hidden beneath the feet of fierce soldiers, who now are dust and ashes in the grave-yard. From the castle one looks down upon the Coquet, which would ever continue in my eyes the sweetest of rivers, even were I to see the far-famed Tiber, or the silver Thames, or the great Ganges, or the mysterious Nile, or even the sacred Jordan. It winds round the foot of the hill on which the castle is built. There is one spot upon its banks where I have often stood to watch the castle rising proudly—albeit, in ruins—above the hill, and wholly reflected in the tranquil waters below. It was my delight to scramble down the banks and to wander fearless along the windings of the tortuous stream, watching the brightness of its waters, now deep, now broad, now silent, now bubbling with the fish leaping up and disappearing, and the woods hanging on the rising bank. If you sat quite quiet, moving not so much as a finger, you might, if you were lucky, presently see a great otter swimming along in the shadow of the bank, and you would certainly see a water-rat sitting in the sun. But if you move so much as an eyelid the rat drops into the water like a stone. Or if you crossed the river, which you can very easily do in some parts by taking off your shoes and stockings and wading, you could go visit the Hermitage. There is the little chapel in which the hapless solitary prayed, and the figure which he rudely sculptured, and even the stone bed on which he lay and the steps of the altar worn by his knees. But children think little of these things, and to me it was only a place where one could rest in cool shade when the sun was hot, or seek shelter from the cold blast of the winter wind.

Higher up the river was Morwick Mill, where Ralph Embleton lived with his uncle.

Or, again, if instead of crossing the bridge and going up to the castle, you walked across the fields which lay at the back of the garden—wild and barren fields covered with tufts of coarse grass—you came, after half a mile or so of rough walking, to the sea-shore, fringed with low sand-hills. It was an endless joy to run over these hills and explore their tiny valleys and peaks of twenty feet high at least. Or one could wander on the sands, looking at the waves, an occupation which never tires, or watching sea-gulls sailing with long white wings in the breeze or

the little oxbirds on the sands. If you walked down instead of up the river, you came, after three miles, to its mouth and the little town of Amble, where every man is a fisherman.

Beyond the town, half a mile out to sea, lies the little island of Coquet. Ralph once rowed me across the narrow channel, and we explored the desert island and thought of Robinson Crusoe which he had read and told me. But this was before the time when we took to pretending at ghosts.

In those days, which seem to have been so happy, and I dare say were, Ralph was free, and could come and go as pleased him best, save that he went every morning to the Vicar, who taught him Latin and Greek, and sometimes remembered—but in kindly moderation—the advice of Solomon. The reason of this freedom was that his uncle, with whom he lived, loved the lad greatly, and intended great things for him, even designing that he should become a great scholar and go to Cambridge. For once there was a member of his family who took to learning and rose from being a poor scholar in that University, which has ever been a kindly nurse or foster-mother of poor scholars, to be a Doctor of Divinity and a Bishop. But my Ralph was never to be a Bishop, nor even a Doctor of Divinity. And a sad change was to happen at the mill.

Everybody was our friend in those days, from Mr. Cuthbert Carnaby, Justice of the Peace, and the Vicar, down to Sailor Nan and her lodger, Dan Gedge, the Strong Man. Everybody had a kind word for Ralph, and nobody told me then how wicked it was to run about with a boy of such unnatural depravity. This, as you will see, was to come. He was a tall boy for his years, and he was six years older than myself, which proves how good-natured he must have been, for few boys of fifteen or sixteen care for the companionship of a girl of nine or ten. As for his face, it has always been the dearest face in the world to me, and always will be, so that I know not whether other people would call it a handsome face. His eyes were eager, as if—which was the case—he always wanted to be up and doing. They were blue eyes, because he was a Northumberland lad, yet not soft and dreamy eyes, as is too often the case with the people of the north. His face was oval and his features regular. He carried his head thrown back, and walked erect with both hands ready, as if

there was generally a fight to be expected, and it was well to be prepared. To be sure, Ralph was one of those who love a fight and do not sulk if they are beaten, but bide a bit and then on again.

On Sunday afternoons, who so ready as he at quarterstaff or wrestling, or any of the manly sports? As regards the cock-fighting, bull-baiting, and dog-fighting, with which our common people so love to inflame their passions and to destroy their sensibility, Ralph would none of it, because he loved dogs, and, indeed, all animals. But at an otter-hunt he was always to the front. He was not fond of books and school-learning, yet he loved to read of foreign lands and of adventures. The Vicar lent him such books, and he told me, long before I thought that he too would become such an one himself, of Pizarro, Cortes, Raleigh, and Francis Drake (not to speak of Robinson Crusoe and Captain Gulliver), and of what great things they did and what fine places they visited. A brave boy always, whose heart leaped up when he heard of brave things.

All the town, I have said, were our friends. But of course we had some who were more with us than others. For instance, what should we have been without the Fugleman? To those who did not know him he was the chief Terror of the town, being so stern and lean in appearance, so stiff and upright, and, besides, officially connected with such things as stocks, whipping-post, pound, and pillory: names of rebuke. To Ralph and to me he was a trusted and thoughtful friend, almost a playfellow. His room at the gateway of the castle, to which he had fitted a door and a window of glass in a wooden frame, was full of things curious and delightful. He had eggs strung in long festoons round the walls, and could tell us where to look for the nests in spring; he had a ferret in a box; he had fishing-rods and nets; he had traps for wild fowl, and for rabbits; he had a fowling-piece, and he could tell us stories without end of his campaigns. Why, this brave fellow, who was for thirty years and more in the Fourteenth Berkshire Regiment, could tell us of the great review held on Salisbury Plain by his majesty King George the First, of pious memory. He could tell us of the famous Siege of Gibraltar, when the regiment was commanded by Colonel Clayton, and of the Battle of Dettingen, where that gallant officer was killed; of Culloden and the Young Pretender. A brave regiment

always and strong in Protestant faith, though much given to drink and only kept in paths of virtue by strict discipline and daily floggings.

Had it not been for the Fugleman—and Sailor Nan, of whom more anon—I for one should never have learned about foreign places at all, any more than the rest of us in Warkworth. Now, indeed, having heard him talk about them so often, I seem to know the phlegmatic Dutch and the slow German, and the Frenchmen with their love of glory, and the Spaniards with their Papistical superstitions, and the cruel ways of the Moors, because the Fourteenth were once at Tangiers.

Ralph, of course, knew much more than I, because he was more curious, being a boy, and asked many more questions, being always, as I have said already, thirsty for information concerning other people. No one else in Warkworth had been abroad, not even Mr. Carnaby, though gentlemen of good birth, like himself, sometimes made the grand tour in their youth, accompanied by tutors. Yet Mr. Carnaby said that they often learned more wickedness than good, and would have been better at home. No one else talked about foreigners or knew anything of them, finding sufficient subject for conversation in the weather and the events of the day in town and country side. I do not except Sailor Nan, although she had sailed over many seas, because a person who only goes to sea remains always, it seems to me, in one spot.

Northumberland is enough, indeed, for the Northumbrians. To begin with, there is no part of England where there is so much left to be told by the old women, who are ever the collectors and treasurers of things gone by and old stories. Why, men are as wasteful of their recollections as of their money, and were it not for the women, the past would perish. It seems to me as if the Dame could never come to an end with the tales she told me, the songs she sang me (in a pretty voice still, though a little cracked with age), the proverbs she had for every occasion, and the adventures of many people with ghosts and fairies. There was the story of the Loathly Worm of Bamborough, to begin with, and the terrible tale of Sir Guy the Seeker. I have stood amid the ruins of Dunstanburgh and wondered where might be the door through which he entered when he found the beautiful lady. Then there was the story of the farmer who found King Arthur and all his knights in

an enchanted sleep, under Sewing Shields Castle. He saw waiting for the first comer a sword and a horn. He drew the sword, indeed, but was too terrified to blow the horn.

Oh, woe betide that evil day

On which the witless wight was born,
Who drew the sword, the garter cut,
But never blew the bugle-horn.

There was the story of the simple man of Ravensworth who died, and was dead for twenty-four hours, during which he was permitted to see both Heaven and Hell, and was sent back to earth to tell the Bishop that he must prepare for death. There was the story of the other simple countryman who had a dream of treasure. In his dream he saw the place where the treasure lay. It was in a triangular space made by three great stones beneath the ground. That simple man was so foolish as to tell his dream. Again the dream came to him. This time he got up early in the morning and went out, spade in hand, to dig. Alas! he was too late. Someone else had been there before him, guided by the first dream, and all that was left was the triangular space made by the three great stones. There was the other treasure-story connected with the name of Nelly the Knocker. Nelly the Knocker was the ghost of an old woman. She came every evening at dusk, and she stationed herself before a great stone standing by the roadside near a farm. Here she knocked with a hammer. Everybody had seen her—no one was afraid of her; the rustics were so used to her that they passed her without a shudder, though, of course, no one ventured quite close to her; her tapping was heard a long way off. One day two men thought they would dig under the stone, to see if anything was there. They dug, and they found a great pot full of gold coins. So that Nelly the Knocker was justified of her knocking. But she came no more. There was still another story of treasure: how it lay buried under a great stone, and how those who would dig for it were frightened away by a figure in white which seemed to fly from under it, no one having courage to remain after the appearance of that figure. There were, lastly, the stories of the fairies who were brought into the country by the Crusaders, never having been heard of before. I have since wondered how they were brought, whether in boxes, or in cages, or in what other way. Those of Northumberland have yellow hair; they live in chambers under green

hills; they have a great day of meeting every year, namely, on the eve of Roodsmass, called by some Hallowe'en. The chief mischief they do—it is, to be sure, a very great mischief—is to steal the babies (wherefore at reaping-time it is most dangerous to leave their little children under the hedges) and to substitute changelings.

"My dear," said the Dame gravely, "I have known such a changeling. His name was Little Hobbie o' the Castleton; he was a dwarf, and wrathful by disposition, inso-much that he would draw his gully upon any of the boys who offended him. But his legs were short, whereby he was prevented from the wickedness of murder, or at least striking and wounding."

There was also the Brown Man of the Moors, but one feared him not at Warkworth, where there are no moors. And there was the fearful Ghost of Black Heddon, known as Silky, because she always appeared dressed in silk; a stately dame, the sight of whom terrified the stoutest.

These are only a few of the tales with which my childish head was filled, and though I know that scoffers may laugh, in an age which affects, with incredible boldness, to disbelieve even the most sacred things, we of the country know very well that these things are too well authenticated not to be true. As regards Silky, for instance, the man was still living, and could be spoken with, when I was a girl, who, being then a youth of tender years, proposed to personate the figure in white which sometimes stood or sat by the bridge on the road to Edlingham from Alnwick. He put on a sheet and sat upon the bridge, expecting to frighten passengers. Lo! beside him he saw, suddenly, the real ghost, saying never a word. And at sight of her he fell backwards over the bridge into the water and broke his leg, so that he went halt to his dying day. This ought to have been a warning both to Ralph and myself: but, alas! it was not.

Sailor Nan, who lived in a cottage up the street between the church and the castle, had seen many ghosts, but hers were sea-ghosts, because, though she had sailed in a great many seas, she had never been ashore—I do not count an hour's run among grog-shops going ashore—in foreign parts, except at Portobello, when that place was taken in the year 1739, when she was with Admiral Burford, being also Captain of the Foretop, and at the time about thirty-six years of age; here, by

reason of a wound, her sex was discovered, so that they disrated her and sent her home. Her memory being good and her recollections being copious, her house was much frequented by young people who loved to hear how she boarded the Santa Isabella when aboard the Dorsetshire, under Admiral Delaval, or how she was present at the famous cutting out of the Pirate with the hangings at the yard-arm of the Pirate Captain and all his crew, and how the ghost of the carpenter (unjustly hanged) haunted the main deck. She was at this time—I mean, at the time when Ralph did penance—about sixty years of age. She wore a sailor's three-cornered hat, cocked, a thick woollen wrapper round her neck, and petticoats almost as short as a sailor's. She wore also thick worsted stockings and men's shoes, so that it was difficult to understand that she was a woman, not a man. Her voice could be either rough and coarse like a sailor's, or thin like a woman's, as she pleased; round her waist she tied a cord, which had a knife at the end of it. She smoked tobacco continually, and drank as much rum as ever she could get. She lived chiefly by selling tansy cakes. After she was dismissed from the navy she married twice. Her first husband was hanged for selling a stolen pig at Morpeth Fair, and her second hanged himself—some said on account of his wife's cudgel. "Himneys," she would say, "it's a fine thing to dee your own fair death." Her conversation was full of strange sea oaths, and she was still as strong as most men are at thirty, with thick brawny arms and sturdy feet, a woman who feared no man. Besides her tansy cakes she told fortunes to those who would give her silver, and she grew in her garden, and sold, marsh and marigold. A tough hardened old woman, her face beaten and hardened by all kinds of weather, who sat outside her door on a big stone all day long, winter and summer, rain, snow, frost, hail, east wind, south wind, sunshine, cloud, or clear, smoking a black pipe of tobacco, and carrying in her hand a stick with which she threatened the children when they ran after her, crying, "Sailor Nan, Sailor Nan; half a woman, half a man!" But I do not think that she ever harmed any of them. People came to see her from all the country-side, partly to talk with her, because she was so full of stories, and partly to look at a woman who had actually carried a cutlass, handled pike and marlinspike, been Captain of the

Foretop, brandished a petty officer's rope's-end, manned a boat, fought ashore side by side with the redcoats, and valiantly boarded an enemy. In the end she lived to be a hundred and eight, but she never altered or looked any older, or lost her faculties, or drank less rum, or smoked less tobacco.

When Ralph was nearly fifteen, a great and terrible misfortune befell him. His uncle, Mr. Samuel Embleton, though not an old man, died suddenly. After he was buried it was found that he had left by will Morwick Mill and the farm, his household furniture, his books, which were not many, and all the money he had in the world, to Ralph as his sole heir. This inheritance proved at first the cause of great unhappiness to the poor boy. For, unfortunately, the will named Mathew Humble as the guardian and executor, to whom the testator devised his best wig and his best coat with his second-best bed and a gold-headed stick. Now it angered Mathew to think that he being also nephew and sister's son of Samuel Embleton, of Morwick Mill, was left no part or portion of this goodly heritage. It would seem that, knowing his uncle's design to send Ralph to Cambridge, and his hope that he would become a credit to the family and a pillar of the Church, he had hoped and even grown to believe firmly and to expect it as a right, that the mill at least, if not the farm, or a portion of it, would be left to him. It was, therefore, a bitter blow for him to find that he was left nothing at all except what he could make or save as guardian of the heir and administrator of the estate, with free quarters at the mill for six years. Surely for a man of probity and common-sense that would have been considered a great deal.

He came, with his sister, who was as much disappointed as himself, in a spirit of rancour, malice, and envy. He regarded the innocent boy as a supplanter. The first thing he did was to inform him that he should have no skulking or idleness. He therefore put a stop to the Latin and Greek lessons with the Vicar, and employed the boy about the work of the place, giving him the hardest and the most disagreeable tasks on the farm. For freedom was substituted servitude; for liberty, restraint; for affection and kindness, harsh language and continual floggings; while Barbara, with her tongue, that ill-governed weapon of women, made him feel, for the first time in his life, how idle, how useless, how greedy a creature he was. The boy bore with all,

as meekly as was his duty, for quite two years. But he often came to me, or to the Fugleman, with fists clenched, declaring that he would endure this ill-usage no longer, and asking in wonder what he had done to deserve it. And at such times he would swear to leave the mill and run away and seek his fortune anywhere—somewhere in the world. It was always in his mind, from the first, when Mathew began his ill-treatment, that he would run away and seek his fortune. In this design he was strengthened by the example of my father, who left the village when a boy of fourteen to seek his fortune, and found—you shall hear, presently, what he found. I dissuaded him, as much as I could, because it was dreadful for me to think of being left without him, or of his running about the country helpless and friendless. The Fugleman, who knew the world and had travelled far, pointed out to him very sensibly that he would have to endure this hardness for a very short time longer, that he was already sixteen and as tall as most men, and could not for very shame be flogged much longer; while, as for Barbara's tongue, he declared that a brave man ought not to value what a woman said, let her tongue run as free as the serjeant at drill of recruits, no more than the price of a rope's end: and again, that in five years' time, as soon as Ralph was twenty-one, he would have the right to turn his cousin out of the mill, which would then become his own property, and a very pretty property too, where an old friend would expect to find a pipe and a glass of Hollands or rum. And he promised himself to assist at the ducking in the river which he supposed that Ralph would give his cousin when that happy day should arrive, as well as at the great feast and rejoicing which he supposed would follow. The result of these exhortations, to which were added those of my grandmother, was that he remained at home, and when Mathew Humble cruelly belaboured him, he showed no anger or desire for revenge, and when Barbara smote him with harsh words and found texts out of the Bible to taunt him with, he made no reply. Nor did he rebel even though they treated him as if he were a common plough-boy and farm drudge, instead of the heir to all.

I confess, and have long felt sincerely, the wickedness of the thing which at length brought open disgrace upon poor Ralph, and drove him away from us. Yet, deserving

of blame and punishment as our actions were, I cannot but think that the conduct of Mathew in bringing the chief culprit—he knew nothing of my share or of the Fugleman's—before his Worship, Mr. Justice Carnaby, was actuated more by malice than by an honest desire to bring criminals to punishment. Besides, he had for some months before this been spreading abroad wicked rumours about Ralph, saying, among other false and malicious things, that the boy was idle, gluttonous, lying, and even thieving, insomuch that the Vicar, who knew the contrary, and that the boy was as good a lad as ever walked, though fond of merriment and a little headstrong, openly rebuked him for malice and evil-thinking, saying plainly that these things were not so, and that, if they were so, Mathew was much to blame in blabbing them about the country, rather than trying to correct the lad's faults, and doing his best to hide them from the general knowledge. Yet there are some who always believe what is spoken to one's dispraise, and sour looks and unfriendly faces were bestowed upon the boy, while my grandmother was warned not to allow me to run wild with a lad of so notorious a bad character. This is all that I meant when I said just now that at first all were our friends.

When Ralph was gone I took little joy in anything until I got my first letter from him, which was not for a very long time afterwards.

Now, one day, as I was walking sorrowfully home, having sat all the afternoon with the Fugleman, I saw Sailor Nan beckoning to me from her stone outside the door.

"Child," she said, "where's your sweetheart?"

"Alack," I replied, "I know not, Sailor Nan."

"Young maids," she went on, "must not puke and pine because they hear nothing for awhile of the lads they love. Be of good cheer. Why, I read him his fortune myself in his own left hand. Did my fortunes ever turn out wrong? As good a tale of luck and fair weather as I ever read. Come, child, give me thy hand; led me read your lines too."

It is strange how in the lines of one's hand are depicted beforehand all the circumstances of life, easy to beread beforehand by those who are wise. Yet have I been told that it is not enough to learn the rules unless you have the gift.

"He will come back," she repeated, after long looking into the hand. "Now, your own hand. Here is a long line of life—yet not as long as my own. Here is the line of marriage—a good line; a happy marriage; a fortunate girl—yet there will be trouble. Is it an old man? I cannot rightly read. Something is in the way. Trouble, and even grievous trouble. But all to come right in the end."

"Is my fortune," I asked, "connected with the fortune of Ralph?"

She laughed her rough hoarse sea-laugh.

"If it is an old man, or if it is a young man, say him nay. Bide your old love. If he press or if he threaten, say him nay. Bide your old sweetheart."

"There was an old man came over the lea,
Heigho! but I won't have 'un;
Came over the lea,
A courtin' to me,

Wi' his old grey beard just newly shaven."

She crooned out the words in a cracked and rusty voice, and pushed my hand away roughly. Then she replaced her pipe in her mouth and went on smoking the tobacco which was her chief food and her chief solace, and took no further heed of me.

CHAPTER V. A SECOND WHITTINGTON.

It becomes not a young girl to pronounce judgment openly (whatever she may think) upon the conduct of her elders, or to show resentment, whatever they may think fit to do; so that when Mathew Humble came to see my grandmother on certain small affairs which passed between them—concerning the sale of a pig, or I know not what—it was my duty, though my heart was aflame, to sit, hands in lap, quiet and mum, when I would rather, Heaven knows, have been boxing his ears and railing him in such language as I could command, for I certainly could never forget, while this man, with the fat red cheeks and pig's eyes, was drinking my grandmother's best cowslip wine, as if he had been the most virtuous of men, that it was through him—though this my grandmother knew not, for I never told her—that Ralph had been betrayed to his Worship, and so been brought to public shame; that it was this man who had beaten the boy without a cause, and that it was his sister who daily sought out hard words and cruel texts, as well as coarse crusts, with which to torture my Ralph. I remembered, as well, that it was this man who had been soundly cudgelled and flogged by the boy he had abused so shamefully.

"You have heard nothing, I dare to say, Mr. Mathew," asked the Dame, for it was now two months after the poor lad's flight, "of our young runaway, whom we in this house greatly lament and wish him well?"

"Nothing as yet," replied Mathew. Then he drank off the rest of his glass, and went on with much satisfaction: "I fear"—yet he looked as if he hoped—"that we shall hear nothing until we hear the worst, as provided by the righteous laws of this country. What, madam, can be expected of one so dead and hardened unto conscience as to offer violence and to turn upon his guardian, and take him while off his guard and unawares with bludgeons and cudgels?"

The whole town had heard by this time and knew very well how Ralph, before his flight, refused to be flogged, and fought his guardian, and vanquished him, insomuch that grievous weals were raised, and bruises sad to tell of. It was Mathew's version that he was taken by surprise. Otherwise, he said, it was nothing but Heaven's mercy prevented him from grievously wounding and hurting the boy, who ran away for fear, and dared not come back. Opinion was divided, for some called shame on Mathew for flogging so tall and strong a lad—almost a man—and others declared that stripes, and those abundant and well laid on, alone could meet the deserts of one guilty of bringing ghostly visitors into discredit, because, should such practices continue, no ghost, even one who came to tell of buried treasure, would be sure of his—or her—reception, and might be scoffed at as an impostor, instead of being received with terror, and the fearful knocking together of knees.

But mostly the general opinion was in favour of the boy and his flight; the folk rejoiced that Mathew had met his match; and our ignorance of Ralph's fate made the people remember once more his many good qualities, his merry friendliness, his honest face, and his blithe brown eyes, in spite of the ghost pretences and the stories spread abroad by his cousins.

"That," said my grandmother in answer to Mathew, "was wrong, indeed. I had hoped that the lad would have returned, made submission, received punishment, and been pardoned. He was ever a boy of good disposition, and his uncle loved him, Mathew—a thing which did without doubt prepossess you in his favour."

Mathew slowly put down his empty

glass, and held up both hands to show astonishment.

"Good disposition? This, madam, springs from your own goodness of heart. Who doth not know in Warkworth that the boy was already, so to speak, a man grown, so far as wickedness is concerned? He of a good disposition? Alas, madam, your heart is truly too full of kindness! For the sake of Missy here—who grows a tall lass—I am glad that he is gone, because he would have taught her some of his own wickedness. Alas!" here he spread his hands, "the things that I could tell you if I would. But one must spare one's cousin. Greediness, laziness, profligacy, luxury. Ha! But I speak not of these matters, because he was my cousin. For his own sake, and because at his age an evil-disposed boy cannot but feel the want of those paternal corrections which I never spared, I grieve that he is no longer with us."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Mathew," said my grandmother, smiling, "I cannot believe, even though you assure us, that Ralph was so wicked as all this, and I hope, for the credit of your family, that you will diligently spread abroad a better opinion. No one is hardened at sixteen."

"Except Ralph," said Mathew, shaking his head.

"And I for one shall continue to hope the best. He will return to us, Mr. Mathew, before long, penitent, and desirous of pleasing his guardian, and you will then be able to correct your judgment."

"I do not think he will ever return," said his cousin. "As for being penitent, he must first take the punishment which awaits him. As for desiring to please—" He stopped short, doubtless remembering that alder-branch.

"If he does not return," my grandmother continued, "till after he becomes of age, it will be your great happiness to hand over his property, well husbanded and with careful stewardship." Here Mathew shut both his eyes and shook his head, but I know not why. "You will feel the pleasure of doing good to one who undutifully offered you violence. He will be the opposite to the man in the parable, for he will have left his talent tied up in a napkin, and he will return and find it multiplied."

"Such as Ralph," said Mathew grimly, "do not repent, nor desire to please, nor return. He began with penance—public penance—think upon that—and saying the

Lord's Prayer aloud. He will be advanced next—which is the regular course of such as him—to pillory. After penance, pillory. It is the regular thing. After pillory, stocks; after stocks, whipping-post or cart-tail; after cart-tail, burning in the hand. Lastly, he will be promoted to the gallows." He positively rubbed his hands together, and laughed at this delightful prospect. Why did he wish his cousin hanged, I wonder, unless that he would then get the mill?

"I trust not," said the Dame. " meantime, you will guard his property."

"His property!" his face grew quite black, "his property! Why, if he comes back there will be something said about that as well. Ha! His property! Ha!"

"But, surely, Mr. Mathew, his uncle bequeathed Morwick Mill to Ralph."

"That, madam, has been the belief of the world. Nevertheless— But I say nothing. This is not the time for serious talk."

When he was gone, my grandmother, who seldom discussed such high matters with me, said:

"Drusilla, I like it not. Doth Mathew Humble desire the death of his cousin? It would seem so. Pillory, stocks, whipping-post, gallows? All for our Ralph? Why this passeth understanding! And wherefore this talk of the world's belief? I like it not, child."

"But you do not think, grandmother, that Ralph will——"

"I think, child, that Ralph is a good lad, but headstrong, perhaps, and impatient of control. Wherever he is I will warrant him honest. Such boys get on, as your father got on. Some day, I make no doubt that he will return. But as for Mathew Humble, I like not his manner of speech."

The same day she put on her bonnet and best shawl and went to the house of Mr. Cuthbert Carnaby, from which I gathered—my little wits jumping as fast as bigger ones—that she went to lay the case before his Worship, which perhaps was the reason why, when Mr. Carnaby next met Mathew (it was after church on Sunday), he informed him that it should be his own business to watch that the mill and farm were properly managed in the interests of the heir, and that a strict account would be required when Ralph returned and came of age. Whereat Mathew became confused, and stammered words incoherent about proving who was

the rightful heir. Yet, for the moment, nothing more was said upon that subject.

The summer and the autumn passed, but no sign or letter came from Ralph. The people in the town ceased, after the manner of mankind, to think of the boy. He was gone and forgotten, yet there were two or three of us who spoke and thought of him continually. First there was the Fugleman, who found his life dull without the boy to talk with. He promised to make a collection of bird's eggs in the spring as a present for him when he should return. Then there was the old woman, Sailor Nan, who kept his memory green. Lastly, there were my grandmother and myself. We knew not, however, where he was, or anything about him, nor could we guess what he was doing, or whither he had gone.

Twice in the year, namely at Christmas or the New Year, and at Midsummer, I had letters from my parents, to which I duly replied. It was in May when Ralph ran away, so that they had three letters from me that year. When my Christmas letters arrived there was mention of our boy, but so strange a tale that we could not understand what to believe or what the thing might mean.

The letter told us that Ralph reached London safely in four or five weeks after leaving us, having walked all the way, save for such trifling lifts and helps as might be had for nothing on the road; he found out my father's shop; he gave him the letter; he slept in the house, and was hospitably entertained. In the morning he was taken by my father to the East India Company's great house in Cornhill, and left there by him, to talk with a gentleman about the obtaining of a post in their service; that, the conversation finished, being dismissed by the gentleman with whom he had taken counsel, Ralph left the office. Then he disappeared, and was seen no more. Nor to the enquiries made was there any answer given or any news of him ascertained. "So wicked is this unhappy town," wrote my mother, "that men are capable of murdering even an innocent lad from the country for the sake of the silver buckles, or the very coat upon his back. Yet there are other ways in which he may have been drawn away. He loved not the thought of city life; he may have taken the Recruiting Sergeant's Shilling, or he may have been pressed for a sailor and sent to sea; or, which Heaven forbid,

he may have been decoyed into bad company, and now be in the company of rogues. Whatever the cause, he hath disappeared and made no sign. Yet he seemed a good and honest lad."

So perplexed were we with the strange and unintelligible intelligence that, after turning it about in talk for a week, it was resolved that we would consult Mr. Carnaby in the matter. It would perhaps have been better if we had kept the thing to ourselves. For this gentleman, though he kindly considered the case, could do nothing to remove the dreadful doubt under which we lay, except that he recommended us to patience and resignation, virtues of which, Heaven knows! we women who stay at home must needs continually practice. We should, I say, have done better had we held our tongues, because Mr. Carnaby told the barber, who told the townsfolk one by one, and then it was whispered about that Ralph had joined the gipsies, according to some; or been pressed and sent to sea, according to others; or had enlisted, according to others; with wild stories told in addition, born of imagination, idle or malignant, as that he had joined a company of common rogues and robbers; or—but I scorn to repeat these things. Everybody, however, at this juncture, remembered the wicked things said of the boy by his cousin. As for Mathew himself, overjoyed at the welcome news, which he received open-mouthed, so to speak, he went about calling all his acquaintance to witness that he had long since prophesied ruin and disaster to the boy, which, indeed, to the fullest extent, a lad so depraved as to horsewhip his own guardian, richly deserved. As for coming back, he said that was not likely, and, indeed, impossible, because he was already knocked on the head—Mathew was quite convinced of this—in some midnight brawl, or at least fallen so low that he would never dare to return among respectable people. These things we could not believe, yet they sank into our hearts and made us uneasy. For where could the boy be, and why did he not send us one letter, at least, to tell us what he had done, and how he had fared?

"Child," said my grandmother, "it is certain that Mathew does not wish his cousin to return. He bears malice in his heart against the boy, and he remembers that should he never come back the mill will be his own." Already he began to give himself the airs of the master, and to talk

of selling a field here and a field there, and of improving the property, as if all was his.

"He will come back," said the Fugleman. "Brave hearts and lusty legs do not get killed. Maybe he hath enlisted. Then he may have gone a soldiering to America, or somewhere in the world, and no doubt will get promotion—aye, corporal first, sergeant next, and perhaps be made Fugleman. Or maybe, as your lady mother says, he hath been pressed, and is now at sea, so that he cannot write. But, wherever he is, be sure he is doing well. Wherefore, heart up!"

Well, to shorten the story, we got no news at all, and could never discover, for many years, what had become of the boy. When four years had passed by without a word or line from him, Mathew grew horribly afraid because Ralph's one-and-twentieth birthday drew near, and he thought the time was come when the heir would appear and claim his own. What preparations he made to receive him I know not. Perhaps a blunderbuss and a cup of poison. But the day passed, and there was no sign of Ralph. Then, indeed, Mathew became quite certain that he would no more be disturbed and that the mill was his own.

As for myself, I sat at home chiefly with my grandmother, who was now beginning to grow old, yet brisk and notable still. There was a great deal to be done, and the days pass swiftly to industrious hands; yet not one so busy and not one so swift but I could find time to think and to pray for Ralph. As for diversions, for those who want them, there are plenty. Do not think that in our little north-country town we have any cause to envy the pleasures of town. Why, to begin with, there are the mummers at Christmas; all through the dark evenings the lads gamble at candle creel for the stable-lanterns; on New Year's Eve we sit up all night long and keep the fire burning—it is dreadful bad luck to borrow fire on a New Year's morning; in the summer there comes the fair; on Sunday afternoons, for the young men, there is wrestling, with quarter-staff and cock-fighting. At harvest-time there is the March of the Kirn baby—

The master's corn is ripe and shorn,
We bless the day that he was born;
Shouting a kirm—a kirm—ahoa!

with the feast afterwards and the cushion-dance, at which the old song of "Prinkam Prankam" is always sung, and the girls are kissed, a proceeding which seems never to

fail in causing the liveliest satisfaction to the men, though why they should wish to kiss young persons for whom they do not feel any affection, and perhaps, even, any respect, passes my poor comprehension. I have seen, on these occasions, a gentleman kiss a dairymaid, and dissemble so well, that one might say he liked it. Besides these amusements, the men had the excitement of the smuggling, whereof you will hear more presently.

To look back upon, in spite of these amusements, it was a long and dreary time of waiting. Yet still the Fugleman kept up my heart, and Sailor Nan swore, as if she was still Captain of the Foretop, that he would come home safe. I was young, happily, and youth is the time for hope. And about the end of the sixth year I had cause to think about other things, because my own misfortunes began.

I had long observed in the letters of my dear parents a certain difference, which constantly caused doubt and questioning; for my mother exhorted me continually, in every letter, to the practice of frugality, thrift, simple living, and the acquisition of housewifely knowledge, and, in short, all those virtues which especially adorn the condition of poverty. She also never failed to bid me reflect upon the uncertainty of human affairs and the instability of fortune; and every letter furnished examples of rich men become poor, and great ladies reduced to beg their bread. My grandmother bade me lay these things to heart, and I perceived that she was disturbed, and she would have written to my father to ask if things were going ill, but for two reasons. The first was that she could neither read nor write, those arts not having been taught her in her childhood; and I testify that she was none the worse for want of them, but her natural shrewdness even increased, because she had to depend upon herself, and could not still be running to a book for guidance. The second reason was that the letters of my father, both to her and to myself, were full of glorious anticipation and confidence. Yes; while my mother wrote in sadness, he wrote in triumph; when she bade me learn to scour pots, he commanded me to study the fashions; when she prophesied disaster, he proclaimed good fortune. Thus, he ordered that I was to be taught whatever could be learned in so remote a town as Warkworth, and that especial care was to be taken in my carriage and demeanour, begging my grandmother to observe the deportment of

Mistress Carnaby, and to bid me copy her as an example; for, he said, a city heiress not uncommonly married with a gentleman of good family, though impoverished fortunes; that some city heiresses had of late married noblemen; that as he had no son, nor any other child but myself, I would inherit the whole of his vast fortune (I thought how I could give it all to Ralph), and, therefore, I must study how to maintain myself in the position which I should shortly occupy; that he was already of the Common Council, and looked before long to be made Alderman, after which it was but a step to Sheriff first and Lord Mayor afterwards; that he intended to build or buy a great house worthy of his wealth; and that he did not wish me to return home until such time as this house was in readiness, because, as one might truly say, his present dwelling in Cheapside, though convenient for his business, and the place where his fortune was made, was but a poor place, quite unworthy of an heiress, and he should wish that I should be seen nowhere until he had prepared a fitting place for my reception; that, in point of beauty, he hoped and doubted not that I should be able to set off and adorn the jewels and fine dresses which he designed presently to give me; and that he desired me especially to pay very particular attention not to seem quite rustical and country-bred, and to remember that the common speech of Northumberland would raise a laugh in London. With much more to the same effect.

I say not that my father wrote all this in a single letter, but in several, so that all these things became implanted in my mind, and both my grandmother and myself were, in spite of my mother's letters, firmly persuaded that we were already very rich and considerable people, and that my father was a merchant of the greatest renown—already a Common Councilman, and shortly to be Alderman, Sheriff, and Lord Mayor—in the city of London. This belief was also held by our neighbours and friends, and it gave my grandmother, who was, besides, a lady of dignified manners, more consideration than she would otherwise have obtained, with the title of Madam, which was surely due to the mother of so great and successful a man.

Now the truth was this: my father was the most sanguine of men, and the most ready to deceive himself. He lived continually (if I may presume to say so without breaking the fifth commandment) in a fool's

paradise. When he was a boy nothing would do for him but he must go to London, refusing to till the acres which would afterwards be his own, because he was ambitious, and ardently desired to be another Whittington. See the dangers of the common Chap books, in which he had read the story of this great Lord Mayor! He so far resembled Whittington that he went up to London (by waggon from Newcastle) with little in his pocket, except a letter of recommendation from the then Vicar of Warkworth to his brother, at the time a glover in Cheapside. How he became apprentice—like Whittington—to this glover, how he fell in love—like Whittington—with his master's daughter, how he married her—like Whittington—and inherited the business, stock, capital, goodwill and all, may here only be thus briefly told; but by the death of his master he became actual and sole owner of a London shop, whereupon, my poor father's brain being always full of visions, he was inflamed with the confidence that now, indeed, he had nothing to look for but the making of an immense fortune. Worse than this, he thought that the fortune would come of its own accord. How a man living in the city of London could make so prodigious a mistake I know not. Therefore he left the whole care of the business to his wife and his apprentices, and for his own part spent the day in coffee-houses or on 'Change, or wherever merchants and traders meet together. This made him full of great talk, and he presently proceeded to imagine that he himself was concerned in the great ventures and enterprises of which he heard so much; or, perhaps, because he could not actually have thought himself a merchant adventurer, he believed that before long he also should be embarking cargoes to the East and West Indies, running under convoy of frigates safe through the enemy's privateers. It was out of the profits of these imaginary cargoes that he was to obtain that vast wealth of which he continually thought and talked until, in the end, he believed that he possessed it. Meantime his poor wife, my mother, left in charge of the shop, and with her household cares as well, found, to her dismay, that the respectable business which her father had made was quickly falling from them, as their old friends died, one by one, or retired from trade, and no new ones coming in their places; for, as I have been credibly in-

formed, the business of a tradesman or merchant in London is so precarious and uncertain, that, unless it be constantly watched, pushed, nursed, encouraged, coaxed, fed, and flattered, it presently withers away and perishes.

For want of the master's presence, for lack of pushing and encouragement, the yearly returns of the shop grew less and less. No one knew this except my mother. It was useless to tell my father. If she begged his attention to the fact, he only said that business was, in the nature of things, fluctuating; that a bad year would be succeeded by a good year; that large profits had recently been made by traders to Calicut and Surinam, where he had designs of employing his own capital, and that ventures to Canton had of late proved extremely successful. Alas, poor man! he had no capital left, for now all was gone—capital, credit, and custom. Yet he still continued to believe that his shop, the shop which came to him with his wife, was bringing him, every year, a great and steady return, and that he was amassing a fortune.

One day—it was a Saturday evening in May—in the year seventeen hundred and seventy, six years after the Flight of Ralph Embleton, when I was in my seventeenth year, and almost grown to my full height, I saw coming slowly along the narrow road which leads from the highway to Warkworth a country cart, and in it two persons, the driver walking at the horse's head. I stood at the garden-gate watching this cart idly, and the setting sun behind it, without so much as wondering who these persons might be, until presently it came slowly down the road, which here slopes gently to the river and the bridge, and pulled up in front of our gate. When the cart stopped a lady got quickly down and seized my hands.

"You are my Drusilla?" she asked, and without waiting for a reply, because she was my mother and knew I could be no other than her own daughter, she fell upon my neck in a passion of weeping and sobbing, saying that she knew I was her daughter dear, and that she was my most unhappy ruined mother. It was my father who descended after her. He advanced with dignified step and the carriage of one in authority. I observed that his linen and the lace of his ruffles were of the very finest, and his coat, though dusty, of the finest broadcloth. He seemed not to perceive my mother's tears; he kissed me and

gave me his blessing. He bade the carter, with majestic air, lead the "coach"—he called the country cart a coach—and take great care of the horse, which he said was worth forty guineas if a penny; but the horse was a ten-year-old cart-horse, worth at most four guineas, as I knew very well, because I knew the carrier.

Amazed at this extraordinary behaviour, I led my parents to my grandmother, and then we presently learned the truth. My father, if you please, was ruined; he was a bankrupt; his schemes of greatness had come to nothing; his vast fortune lay in his imagination only; he had lost his wife's money and his own. He had returned to his native county, his old friends having clubbed together and made a little purse for him, and his creditors having consented to accept what they could get and to give him a quittance in full, because he was known to be a man of integrity; otherwise he might have been lodged in gaol, where many an unfortunate, yet honest, man lieth in misery.

The disaster was more than my father's brain could bear. Nothing more dreadful can happen to a merchant and one in trade, than to become a bankrupt. To lose his money is bad, but many a man loses his all, yet does not become bankrupt, and so saves his credit. A merchant's credit is for him what his honour is to a soldier, his piety to a divine, her virtue to a woman, his skill to a craftsman. My father, I say, could not bear it. First, as soon as he fairly understood what had happened, he fell into a lethargy, sitting in a chair all day in silence, and desiring nothing but to be left alone. After a while the lethargy changed into a restlessness, and he must needs be up and doing something—it mattered not what. Then the restlessness disappeared and he became again his old self, as cheerful, as sanguine, as confident, with no other change than a more settled dignity of bearing, caused by the belief, the complete delusion, that now his fortune was indeed made; that he possessed boundless wealth, and that he was going to leave London and to retire into the country, as many great merchants used to do, in order to enjoy it.

He was perfectly reasonable on all other points; he could talk on politics or on religion, on London matters, on the affairs of Warkworth, or on the interests of the farmers; but always on the assumption of his own wealth. The broad fields everywhere he believed to be his own. If he

came with me, as he often did, when I milked the cow, fed the pigs and the chickens, made the bread, brewed the beer, or turned the churn, he laughed at what he was pleased to call the condescension of his heiress in doing this menial work, and called me his pretty shepherdess. And sometimes he entertained me with stories of how his fortune was made. Chiefly I found his imagination ran upon Canton, with trade in tea and silk.

"It is very well known," he would say, "that those who venture in the Greek seas and the Levant run very heavy risks; they are more dangerous, my dear child, than many places much farther away. I considered the Levant trade carefully, before embarking my money in foreign ventures. I was always prudent, perhaps too prudent. Yet the end hath justified me. Eh, Drusilla, hath not the end justified me? Why, I have known a man on 'Change worth this day a plum—a round plum, child—and to-morrow not half that sum, by reason of losses in the treacherous Levant. But, alas! there are perils in every sea. Tempests and hurricanes arise; there are hidden rocks; there are fires at sea; ships are becalmed—all these things we call the Hand of God; there are also pirates everywhere; they lurk in the Mahometan ports of Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis; they hide in the fever-smitten harbours of Madagascar—but men born to be hanged laugh at fever; they abound in the West Indies and in the Narrow Seas. We are always at war with some great power, and therefore we have privateers to dread; these, my dear, are more desperate and blood-thirsty villains even than your murderous pirates. And there is danger from mutiny aboard, whereby friends of my own—substantial men, mark you, on 'Change—have lost many a noble ship and precious cargo. We on 'Change think nothing of these chances; we are on the mountains one day and in the depths the next. Yet, like the good old country to which we belong, we weather the storm, and in the end grow rich. Rich? Drusilla, my child, we grow enormously rich. The Earl of Northumberland himself, with all his acres, is not so rich as my father."

My mother spoke of him, when he was not present, with a bitterness which grieved me sore. But I knew not the trouble she had had, and the long anticipation of this trouble. It appeared, indeed, as if a sound, though modest, business, with the certainty of a competence, had been thrown away and

wasted for want of a little—only a little forethought and care. My father, at the best, was only a simple glover with a small shop and two apprentices. What could a poor lad from Northumberland expect more? All that a woman can do my mother had done. But in trade a woman can do but little. She can serve, but she cannot go about and make trade—she cannot persuade Merchant Adventurers to load their ships with her wares. Yet, even with the memory of her wrongs, and her ruined hopes, she was always gentle and forbearing in the presence of her afflicted husband, careful to keep him happy in his delusion, and tender with him, so that he should never feel the mischief he had done.

As for our means, I dared not ask. But presently I learned that all we had was the annuity of forty pounds a year, which would terminate with my grandmother's death, the cottage in which we lived, and a slender stock of money, I knew not how much, in my mother's hands.

Alas! this was the end of my splendid hopes—of my father's triumphant letters! I was indeed an heiress!

CHAPTER VI. THE LETTER AT LAST.

ONE must accept without murmuring the ordinance of Providence. Murmuring avails nothing and cannot restore things lost. The Hand which gives also takes away. The loss of that fortune, which I knew only by hearsay, and expected without eagerness, affected me but little in comparison with the burden of two more to keep upon our forty pounds a year. I saw clearly that I must for henceforth rise early and work late, and no more eat any bread of idleness. We had a servant, but we now sent her away, my mother and I doing all the house-work. In addition, I fed the poultry and milked the cow.

The good old Fugleman came every day as soon as he heard of our misfortunes and understood that I could no more go to the castle of an afternoon, and became of very great service indeed, for he kept the garden for us, and talked with my father, who, to be sure, was best out of the house, where he was only in our way. He also—which was kind of him—took the management of the pigs. And I must also confess my great obligations to Mrs. Carnaby, who, understanding the straits into which we were fallen, was so good as to send me and persuade other ladies of this part of the county to send me fine work to do, by means of which I earned a little money,

which went into the common purse and was useful. My mother wept to think that I must rise at five, and, after doing the house-work and the outdoor work, making butter and sending it away to be sold with eggs and cream-cheese and other little things—it was not much we got, but something—to be compelled to sit down in the afternoon to my needle, and work till nine at night. But I was a tall strong girl; work did me no harm. I should have been happy but that I saw my grandmother grow daily weaker. She sickened and began to fail when she saw her son, of whom she was so proud, return a beggar to his native county, and when she heard his poor deluded talk. A grievous sight it was to see the poor old lady, once so strong and active, sit feeble in her chair by the fireside, while her sad eyes followed her son as he proudly walked to and fro in the room and told the tale of his investments and his wealth. Sometimes I noted how my mother looked wistfully upon this spectacle of age and decay, and saw how her mouth worked and her lips moved, and knew well that she was saying to herself, "When she dies, what next?" And then I was fain to go away into the garden, where they could not hear me, and cry over troubles of the present and fears of the future which seemed hard to be borne.

"Don't cry, Miss Drusy"—yet the good old Fugleman looked as if he, too, would willingly shed a tear—"don't cry; think to yourself that when the boy comes home all will go well again. Merry as a wedding-bell shall we be then."

"Ah, when—when?"

We had two visitors who came often. One of them was his Worship Mr. Cuthbert Carnaby. He came, he said, in order to profit by the experience and conversation of my father.

"I know, child," he said, "and greatly commiserate, the disorder of his brain, yet I cannot but marvel at the extent of his knowledge, the justice of his remarks, and the weight of his opinion. It is indeed a marvel to me that one so richly endowed by Providence with understanding should have so conspicuously failed in the business of his life, which was to grow rich."

I take pleasure in quoting the testimony of so eminent an authority to the great qualities possessed by my unfortunate father, and it did one good to see them walking in the garden, my father bearing himself with the deference due to a

gentleman of good old family, yet expecting equal deference to himself as a man of great success and wealth, and both arguing on the politics and the conduct of affairs with as much gravity as two plenipotentiaries or ambassadors extraordinary.

Strange it was, indeed, to think that one was mad who could converse so rationally, with such just estimate of things, with so true a knowledge of their proportion, so vast a fund of information as to the state of trade all over the world, the value of gold, the balance of profit, the growth of industries; yea, and even the power and prospects of foreign states with their wants and their dangers. Or that one could be mad who could set forth with such lucidity the foundation of our Christian faith, and the arguments for the doctrines taught in our churches. He was not only sane, but he was a man worth listening to on all subjects—save one. For he was fully possessed with the idea that he was as wealthy as he had ever desired to be. His poor brain was turned, indeed, on this point, and after a while I thought little of it, because we became accustomed to it, and because it seemed a harmless craze. Yet it was not harmless, as you will hear. Indeed, even an innocent babe in arms may be made the instrument of mischief in the hands of a wicked man.

Our second visitor was Mathew Humble. He came first, he said, to pay his respects to my father. Then he began to come with great regularity. But I perceived soon, for I was no longer a child, but already a woman, that he had quite another object in view, for he cast his eyes upon me in such a way as no woman can mistake. Even to look upon those eyes of his made me turn sick with loathing. Why, if this man had been another Apollo for beauty I would not have regarded him; and so far was he from an Apollo that a fat and loathsome Satyr more nearly resembled him.

He was already three or four and thirty, which I, being seventeen, regarded as a very great age indeed; and most Northumbrian folk are certainly married and the fathers of children already tall before that time.

He was a man who made no friends, and lived alone with his sister Barbara. No girl at all, so far as I know, could boast of having received any attentions from him; he was supposed to care for nothing except money and strong drink. Every evening he sat by himself in the room which over-

looks the river, with account-books before him, and drank usquebaugh. But he loved brandy as well, or Hollands, or rum, or indeed anything which was strong. And being naturally short of stature he was grown fat and gross, with red hanging cheeks, which made his small eyes look smaller and more pig-like, a double chin, and a nose which already told a tale of deep potatoes, so red and swollen was it. What girl of seventeen could regard with favour—even if there were no image of a brave and comely boy already impressed upon her heart—such a man as this, a mere tosspot and a drinker? And, worst of all, a secret and solitary drinker—a gloomy drinker.

It was strange that, about the time when Ralph's disappearance was first heard of, rumours ran about the town that perhaps the mill would turn out, after all, to be the property of Mathew Humble; that these rumours were revived at the approach of Ralph's twenty-first birthday; and that again, when Mathew first began his approaches to me, the rumour was again circulated. By the help of the Fugleman I traced these rumours to the barber; and, still with his help—because every man must be shaved, and, while being shaved, must talk—I traced these to none other than Mathew himself. He had, then, some object to gain; I knew not what at the time. Later on I discovered that his design was to make it appear—should Ralph ever return—that I had taken him for a husband when I thought he was the actual master and owner of all; for I believe he allowed himself no doubt as to the result of his offers. Doth it not seem as if the uglier, the older, the less attractive a man is, whether in person or in mind, the more certain he becomes of conquering a woman's heart?

The rumour on this occasion was more certain and distinct than before. It was now stated that Mr. Embleton was discovered to have made a later will, which had been proved, and was ready to be produced if necessary; that in this will the testator, after deploring the badness of heart manifested by his nephew Ralph, devised the whole of his property to his nephew Mathew. The barber, for his part, had no doubt of the truth of this report; but those who asked Mathew whether it was true, received mysterious answers, as that time would show; that in this world no one should be certain of anything; that many is the slip between cup and lip; that should an occasion arise

the truth of the story would be tested; such oracles as incline the hearers to believe all that has been said—and more. Barbara, his sister, for her own part, showed great willingness to answer any questions which might be put to her. But she knew little; her brother, she said, was a close man, who sat much alone and spoke little.

And then the Fugleman told me a very strange story indeed, and one which seemed to bode no good to any of us. By this time I so regarded Mathew that I could not believe he could do or design aught but evil. This was wrong, but he was most certainly a man of very evil disposition.

His own private business, the Fugleman told me—this was nothing in the world, as I very well knew, but the snaring of rabbits, hares, partridges, and other game on the banks of the river—led him sometimes past Morwick Mill, in the evening or late at night. There was a room in the mill—the same room in which Mathew was vanquished and beaten—the window of which looked out upon the river, which is here a broad and shallow brook. The bank rises steep on the other side, and is clothed with thick hanging woods in which no one ever walked except the Fugleman, and he, for those purposes I have just mentioned, always alone and after sundown. Now his eyes were like unto the eyes of a hawk; they knew not distance; they could see, quite far off, little things as well as great things; and the Fugleman saw, night after night, that Mathew Humble was sitting locked up in his room, engaged in writing or copying something. I believe that if the Fugleman had known how to read, he would have read the writing even across the river. Unhappily, he had never learned that art. Mathew was making a copy, the Fugleman said, of some other document. But what that document was he could not tell. It was something on large sheets of paper, and in big handwriting. He wrote very slowly, comparing word for word with the papers which he seemed copying. Once when there was a noise as of someone at the door, he huddled all the papers together, and bundled them away in a corner quickly and with an affrighted air. He was therefore doing something secret, which means something wicked. What could it be?

"Little he thinks," said the Fugleman, "that Master Ralph is sure to come home and confound his knavish tricks, and trip

up his heels for him. Ah, I think I see him now, in lace ruffles and good broadcloth, walking up the street with a fine City Madam on his arm."

I should have been very well contented with the lace ruffles and good broadcloth—indeed, I asked for nothing better—but I wanted no fine City Madam at the mill.

Later on I learned what this thing was which he took so long to copy, and which gave him so much anxiety. But it was like a fire-ship driven back by the wind among the vessels of those who sent it forth.

One morning when I was busy in the kitchen with household work, and my mother was engaged upon the family sewing, Mathew came and begged to have some conversation with her. He said that, first of all, he was fully acquainted with her circumstances, and the unhappy outlook before her, when my grandmother should die and leave us all without any income at all; that, being of a compassionate heart, he was strongly minded to help them; and that the best way, as well as he could judge, would be to make her daughter Drusilla his wife. This done, he would then see that their later years would be attended with comfort and the relief of all anxiety.

At first my mother did not reply. She had no reason to love Mathew, whose unkindness to his ward was well known to her. Again, she had still some remains of family pride left—you do not destroy a woman's pride by taking away her money. She thought, being the daughter of a well-to-do London citizen, that her child should look higher than a man who had nothing in the world of his own but thirty acres of land, although he lived at the mill and pretended to be its owner. And she very truly thought that the man was not in person likely to attract so young a girl as myself. But she spoke him fair. She told him that I was young as yet, too young to know my own mind, and that perhaps he had better wait. He replied that he was not young, for his own part, and that he would not wait. Then she told him that she should not, certainly, force the inclinations of her daughter, but that she would speak to me about him.

She opened the subject to me in the evening. No sooner did I understand that Mathew had spoken for me than I threw myself upon my knees to my mother, and implored her with many tears and protestations not to urge me to accept his suit. I declared

with vehemence, that if there were no other man in the world, I could not accept Mathew Humble. I reminded her of his behaviour towards Ralph. I assured her that I believed him to be one who sat drinking by himself, and a plotter of evil, a man with a hardened heart and a dead conscience.

Well, my mother shed tears with me, and said that I should not be married against my will; that Mathew was not a good man, and that she would bid him, not uncourtously, go look elsewhere. This she did, thanking him for the honour he had proposed.

For some reason, perhaps because he did not really wish to marry me, perhaps because he had not thoroughly laid out the scheme of marrying me to revenge himself upon Ralph, Mathew gave me a respite for the time, though I went in great terror lest he might pester my mother or myself. Perhaps, which I think more likely, he trusted to the influence of poverty and privation, and was contented to wait till these should make me submissive to his will.

However that may be, he said nothing more concerning love, and continued his visits to my father, in whose conversation he took so great a pleasure. Oh, villain!

Things were in this posture, I being in the greatest anxiety and fear that something terrible was going before long to happen to us, when a most joyful and unexpected event happened.

It was in the month of May, seven years since Ralph's flight—like the followers of Mohammed, I reckoned the years from the Flight—that this event happened.

The event was this, that the Fugleman had a letter sent to him—the first letter he ever received in his life.

I saw the post-boy riding down the road early in the afternoon; he passed by the house of Mr. Carnaby, where he sometimes stopped, past our cottage, where he never stopped because there was nobody who wrote letters to us, and over the bridge, his horse's hoofs clattering under the old gateway. I thought he was going to the vicarage, but he left that on his right and rode straight up the street, blowing his horn as he went. I wondered, but had no time to waste in wonder, who was going to get a letter in that part of the town. The letter, in fact, was for no other than the Fugleman.

Half an hour later the Fugleman, who had been at work in the garden all the

morning, came down the town again, and asked me—with respect to her ladyship, my mother—if I would give him five minutes' talk. With him was Sailor Nan, cause the thing was altogether so strange that he could not avoid telling her about it, and she came with him, curious as a woman, though bold and brave as becomes an old salt.

"'Tis a strange thing," said the Fugleman, turning the unopened letter over and over in his hand; "'tis a strange thing; here is a letter which tells me I know not what—comes from I know not where. I have paid three shillings and eightpence for it. A great sum. I doubt I was a fool. It may mean money, and it may mean loss."

"Burn it, and ha' done," said Sailor Nan. "'Tis from some land-shark. Burn the letter."

"I am sixty, or mayhap seventy years of age. Sixty, I must a-be. Yes; sure and certain, sixty. Yet never a letter in all my days before."

Now, which is very singular, not the least suspicion in our minds as to the writer of the letter.

"Is it," I asked, "from a cousin or a brother?"

"Cousin?" he repeated, with the shadow of a smile across his stiff lips. "Why, I never had a father or a mother, to say nothing of a brother or a cousin. When I first remember anything, I was running in the streets with other boys. We stole our breakfast, we stole our dinner, and we stole our supper. Where are they all now, those little rogues and pickpockets, my companions? Hanged, I doubt not. What but hanging can have come to them? But as for me, by the blessing of the Lord, I was enlisted in the Fourteenth Line, and after a few hundreds taken mostly by three dozen doses, which now are neither here nor there, and are the making of a lad, I was flogged into a good soldier, and so rose as was due to merit. A hearty three dozen, now and then, laid on with a will in the cool of the morning, works miracles. Not such a regiment in the service as the Fourteenth. And why? Because the colonel knew his duty and did it without fear or favour, and the men were properly trounced. Good comrades all, and brave boys. And where are they? Dead, I take it; beggars, some; fallen in action, some; broke, some; in comfortable berths, like me, some. If all were living, who would there be to send

me a letter, seeing there wasn't a man in all the regiment who could write?"

Strange that not one of us even then guessed the truth.

It was a great letter, thick and carefully sealed, addressed to "Fugleman Furlong, At his room in the Castle of Warkworth, Northumberland, England." It came from foreign parts, and the paper was not only stained, but had a curious fragrance.

I broke the seal and tore open the covering of the letter. Within was another packet. Oh, Heavens! It was addressed to "Drusilla Hetherington, care of the Fugleman, to be forwarded without delay. Haste—post haste!"

And then I knew without waiting to open the letter that it would be from none other than Ralph. It must be from Ralph. After all these years, we were to hear once more from Ralph. I stood pale and trembling, nor could I for some moments even speak. At last I said:

"Fugleman—Nan—this letter is addressed to me. It is, I verily believe, from Ralph Embleton. Wait a little, while I read it."

"Read it—read it!" cried the old man.

Could I—ah! merciful Heaven—could I ever forget the rapture, the satisfied yearning, the blissful content, the gratitude, with which I read that sweet and precious letter? They waited patiently; even the rude and coarse old woman refrained from speech, while I read page after page. They said nothing though they saw the tears falling down my face, because they knew that they were tears of happiness.

After seven long years, my Ralph was talking to me as he used to talk. I knew his voice, I recognised his old imperious way, I saw that he had not changed. As if he would ever change!

When I had finished and dried my tears they begged me to read his letter to them.

"MY DEAR, DEAR GIRL"—I told them that I could not, indeed, read all, but that I would read them what I could; and this was the beautiful beginning, in order that I should know at the outset, so thoughtful he was, and for fear of my being anxious on the point, that he loved me still, and had never forgotten me. "My dear, dear Girl,—It is now six years since I bade you farewell at your garden-gate and started upon my journey to London. Your father has doubtless told you how I presented myself and with what kindness he received me. I am very sure that you have not forgotten me, and I hope that you will

rejoice to hear of my good fortune"—Hope, indeed! Could he not be sure?—

"I have no doubt also that he hath informed you of the strange good fortune which befell me after he left me at the East India Company's House, of which I told him by letter and special messenger, to whom I gave, to ensure speed and safe delivery, one shilling." (But it would appear that this wicked messenger broke his word, and took the shilling, but did nothing for it—a common thief, who deserved to be hanged, like many another no more wicked than himself. Oh! what punishment too great for this breach of trust, small as it seemed! See, now, what a world of trouble was caused by that little theft.) "It was truly by special Providence that, while Mr. Silvertop talked with me, the great Captain who won the Battle of Plassy should have been standing near and should have overheard what passed. When I was bidden go my ways for a foolish boy (because I did not wish to be a writer) and waste his time no longer, I was much cast down, for now I began to fear that I must, like the most of mankind, take what was assigned to me by Providence rather than what I would like. And I could plainly see that there remained only one choice for me; namely, I must return to the hated rule of my cousin who would keep me as a plough-boy as long as he could, or I must betake me to the task of sweeping out and serving a shop. And yet, what shop? But who would employ me? Therefore, I hung my head and stood irresolute without the Company's house. Now, presently, the gentleman whom I had seen within came forth with another officer, brave in scarlet. He saw me standing sadly beside the posts, and inspired by that noble generosity which has always distinguished this great man, he clapped his hand upon my shoulder.

"So," he said, "you are the lad who loves a sword better than a pen?"

"If it please your honour," I replied.

"A sword means peril to life and limb," he said sternly; "he who goes a fighting in India must expect hard fare, rough sleeping, rude knocks. He must be ever on the watch against treachery. He must meet duplicity with equal cunning. He must obey blindly; he must never ask why; if he is sent to die like a rat in a hole, he must go without murmur or question. What! you think—do you?—that to carry a sword is to flaunt a scarlet coat before the ladies of St. James's?"

"'Nay, sir, with respect. I have read the lives of soldiers. I would willingly take the danger for the sake of the honour. But alas! I must stay at home and sweep a shop.'

"'What is thy birth, boy?'

"I told him that, and satisfied him on other points, including the reason of my flight, in which I trust that I was no more than truthful. Then he said:

"'I am Lord Clive,' and paused as if to know whether I had heard of him.

"You may be sure I was astonished, but I quickly doffed my hat and made him my best country-bred bow.

"'My lord,' I said 'we have heard, even in Northumberland, of Plassy.'

"'Good! I went to India as a writer—a miserable quill-driving writer. Think of that. What one man has done another may do. Now, boy, I sail this day for India. There will be more fighting, a great deal more fighting. If you please you shall go as a cadet with me. But there is no time to hesitate: I sail this day. Choose between the shop-sweeping and the musket. You will fight in the ranks at first, but if you behave well the sword will come after. Choose—peace and money-scraping at home like these smug-faced fat citizens,' he swept his hand with lordly contempt, 'or fighting and poverty, and perhaps death abroad. Choose.'

"'I humbly thank your lordship,' I said, 'I will follow you if you will condescend to take me.'

"Then he bade me go straight to Limehouse Pool, where I should find the ship at anchor. I was to take a note to the purser who would give me an outfit.

"Thus, my dear Drusilla, did I find my fortune and sail to foreign parts under as brave and great a Captain as this country will ever see.

"Our voyage lasted eleven months. There were three hundred raw recruits on board, mostly kidnapped or inveigled under false pretences by crimps and the scoundrels of Wapping. When they were first paraded, they were as beggarly looking a lot as you would wish to see, ragged, dirty, mutinous, and foul-mouthed. Yet in a couple of months, by daily drill, by good food and sea air, by moderate rations of rum, by sound flogging, by the continual discipline of the boatswain's rope's-end and the sergeant's rattan, the regimental supplejack, and the ship's cat-o'-nine-tails, they became as promising soldiers as one would wish. As for me, I stood with them in the

drill and did my best. Of course I could not expect his lordship to notice so humble a cadet as myself, but one evening, when we were near the end of our voyage, he sent for me and gave me a glass of wine, and kindly bade me be patient and of good cheer, because, he said, young gentlemen of merit and courage would be sure to find opportunities for distinction."

Ralph then went on to describe the life of a soldier in India, and to tell me—but this I leave out for fear of being tedious—how he received his commission and how he got promotion. It is sufficient to say that at the time he wrote, after six years of service, he held the commission of a captain. Nor was that all. He had been able to render such signal service to a certain Rajah, that this prince, who was not ungrateful, and hoped, besides, for more such services, took him one day into his treasure-house and bade him help himself to all if he pleased.

"My dear," he continued, "I knew not that the world contained so much treasure. Yet this Rajah is but a petty prince, and his wealth is as nothing compared with that of many others. There were diamonds in bags, uncut, whose worth I know not, and diamonds in rings, sword-handles, and women's gauds; there were rubies, emeralds, sapphires, turquoises, opals, and all kinds of precious stones strung rudely on common string as if they were but pebbles. There were also gold and silver vessels of all kinds, and there were casks full of gold coins. As I took out a handful I saw that many of them were ancient, with Greek characters, perhaps left in this country by that great soldier Alexander. When I had surveyed these wonders I thanked him, and said that I should not presume to take so much as a single gold coin from his treasure, but that if it should please his Highness to offer me a present, I should accept it with gratitude, provided it was not too costly. He laughed at these words, and when we came away I was so loaded with gold that I fancied myself already a rich man.

"Since this event it hath pleased Lord Clive to issue an order which prohibits officers from accepting henceforth any presents at all from the native princes. I cannot but feel grateful that the order was not issued before my own good fortune. Doubtless his Excellency hath good reasons for this order, which places the military service at a disadvantage compared with the writers, who have great opportunities of making fortunes;

and I cannot but think that it is a more noble thing to win a fortune at the point of the sword, than by such arts as are daily practised by the writers and civil servants of the Company. There are many Englishmen, and many Frenchmen as well—but we are driving them out of the country—who have become rich in the military service of the Indian princes; yet I shall not exchange my present masters so long as the merchants—who think nothing of glory or of this country, yet a great deal of their dividends—perceive that it is for their safety, as well as for their credit, to extend their power; and I have a reasonable hope that the good fortune which hath hitherto attended me may continue, so that I may return to my native country, if only in my old age, amply provided. As regards the climate, I have as yet experienced no great inconvenience from the heat. The natives have learned to fear an Englishman rather than to love him, which is, methinks, the thing we should most desire when we have to rule over people as ignorant of the Christian virtues, although not barbarous, like the naked blacks, but a most ingenious, dexterous, and skilful people, and of subtle intellect, yet slothful of body, lovers of rest, deceivers, regardless of truth, for ever scheming plots and contriving subtleties, and more cruel to prisoners than the Spanish Inquisition. The best among them are followers of Mahomet, who make faithful servants and good soldiers. It is a country where the ambition and jealousy of princes are continually causing fresh wars to be undertaken, and where a European may lead a life of adventure to his heart's content."

I was reading, as I have said, this letter aloud in presence of my two faithful friends. Now when I spoke of the drill on board, and the sergeant's rattan, and the regimental supple-jack, the Fugleman drew himself upright and shouldered the garden-spade, because there was no pike at hand; and when I read of the bo's'n's rope's-end and the ship's cat-o'-nine-tails, Sailor Nan cocked her hat and stood with feet apart and hands upon her hips, and began, but in a whisper, to murmur strange sea oaths; and when I read the account of the fight in which Ralph's courage saved this grateful Rajah—it was a most dreadful battle, in which hundreds of brave fellows and treacherous Hindoos were killed, so that to read it made one's heart cease to beat—the Fugleman, carried beyond him-

self, executed capers with the spade which signified little to my ignorant eyes, but which were, I believe, the movements with which the trained soldier attacks with the bayonet, and the old sailor with a mop-stick cut down her thousands, mighty curses rolling softly from her lips like distant thunder.

If the beginning of the letter was delightful, judge how beautiful was the end:

"I have now, my dear, told you all that concerns myself. I suppose you have long since left Warkworth and gone to live with your parents, to whom I beg to convey my respects and best wishes. If, among your rich friends and the gaieties of the fashion"—the "gaieties!"—"you have found lovers (as to be sure you must) and a husband, or one whom you have distinguished with your favour and regard, you will remember that I shall ever be to you as a brother; for, lover or brother, I can never cease to love——"

"A good lad!" said the Fugleman.

"As ever trod the deck!" said the sailor. "Go on, Miss Drusy."

"And I am sure that you have grown up as tall and as beautiful as an angel."

"She has," said the Fugleman.

"Taller, ye lubber," said the sailor, "and more beautiful an angel than ever I clapped eyes on, nor never a Peg nor a Poll at Sheerness or Deptford or the Common Hard to show a candle alongside her. What's even a frigate in full sail compared with a lovely woman?"

This enthusiasm for the loveliness of her own sex (unusual among old women), I put down to her naval experiences, and familiarity with sailor talk, and went on quickly; because, if Ralph loved to flatter me, I ought not to let these poor people follow his example. An angel! But men are so. They cannot give enough; they lavish their praises, as they lavish the very fruits of their labours, upon the women they love. We women measure our gifts—except to our boys. I pass over, therefore, the fond words of a lover about blue eyes and curling hair, and Nymphs in cool grots, and soft smiles and other imaginary gifts and graces, all of which my listeners applauded, nodding their heads. Oh! he could say what he pleased, he could imagine all the perfections, so that he continued to tell me, as he did in this letter, how he thought upon me daily, and loved me always more and more.

"As for the address of this letter," he

said, "I know not where in London or elsewhere your father may now reside; therefore I forward it to the care of the Fugleman, with request that he will send it to you at the earliest opportunity, and by a safe hand. Will you, in return, inform him of my continued esteem and friendship?"

"Esteem and friendship!" repeated the Fugleman. "This from a Captain! Was ever such a boy?"

"And if you find an opportunity, tell Sailor Nan that half her fortune has come true."

She replied that at her time of life it was odd if she couldn't tell the fortune of a boy, and as for the present cruise, it was bound to be a fair-weather voyage.

Finally, my brave lover begged me to write to him and tell him all that had happened since his departure, and subscribed himself, with much love, Ralph Embleton.

When we had read the letter twice, which took us all the afternoon, and cost me three hours' sewing, we took counsel together. First they were both for telling it about the town, and having a bonfire, with the ringing of the church bells in a triple bob major, but I was of opinion that it would be best to keep our own counsel for awhile. Therefore I bound them both to secrecy and silence. I would let Mathew alone, and watch him. He should not know anything, not even that Ralph was alive and prosperous; and had I kept this resolution, because my two friends were loyal and secret as the grave, it would have been better in the end for all of us, and much better for Mathew. But, as the wise man said, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

CHAPTER VII. MATHEW'S FRIENDLY OFFER.

THIS letter made me, from one of the most unhappy of girls, the most joyous. The immediate prospect of poverty—for the Dame declined daily—the hard work which began at daylight and ended at bedtime, the certain knowledge that Mathew was not satisfied with a simple refusal—these things, which had before filled my mind with terror, now appeared like the imaginary spectres of the night, which cease to alarm when the day has dawned. To me it was more than the dawn of day; it was the uprising of a glorious sun of love and hope. Ralph loved me; Ralph was well, prosperous, and in high esteem; Ralph was already wealthy; Ralph would come

home, and all things would be well, whatever might happen at the moment. Yet this I could not tell to any. Mathew was not to know; my poor old grandmother was too old now, and too failing of mind and body, to care for earthly things; my father had clean forgotten the boy; my mother would not greatly care to know; nor would it soothe her anxieties to feel that we had a protector separated from us by the rolling seas and by a voyage of ten months or more. What good would be his far-off treasures to us, she would have asked, when what we want is beef for the pot and bread for the board? As for my father's madness, it increased every day, so that now our cottage was a palace indeed, every meal was a banquet, and the small beer of my brewing was champagne, port, Malaga, or Imperial Tokay. But Mathew was too much with him, and it made me uneasy to observe how he complimented my father on his wisdom, his resolution, and his wonderful success.

"In all respects, madam," he said to my mother, "I find your husband most sensible and full of sound judgment. I have taken his counsel, of late, in many private matters of importance."

"Then the Lord help you!" said my mother sharply.

"What if he does exaggerate his private fortune?" Mathew went on. "It is a failing with many persons concerned in trade."

"If you mean this in kindness, sir," said my mother, "I thank you humbly for your good opinion of my poor distraught husband. If you mean it in mockery, you are a most cruel man."

"Indeed, madam," he replied, bowing, "pray believe that I mean it in kindness."

He had no kindness at all in his nature. He designed these words to cover his iniquitous purpose.

So he continued to come and go, and to walk with my father in the garden, and whatever wild things my father said he would accept gravely as if they were indeed words of wisdom. No one, except myself, suspected him of sinister designs, and my father disclosed to him the whole prodigious extent of his madness, so that I could have cried with shame and humiliation, Mathew knowing well, as all the world knew by this time, that we were little better than the poorest in the parish.

"The world, sir," the poor gentleman would say with a lofty air, "has yet to learn how great a benefactor a simple

London citizen may be. There have been many benefactors. I acknowledge their greatness. But wait, sir, until my will is opened and read. To you, friend Mathew, I have bequeathed a poor ten thousand pounds—no more."

"Oh, sir!" He bowed and spread his hands. "This is indeed goodness."

"It is the duty of a rich citizen to discover merit and to reward it—the plain duty. I am a London citizen, and am perhaps more proud of this position than becomes a Christian. The bulk of my fortune I have left to my daughter, whom I design in marriage for some great nobleman. But I have not forgotten the poor of my native parish, Mathew—no, no; and you will find, when my will is read, that schools, a hospital, marriage-portions for the girls, and apprentice-money for the boys, will attest my remembrance of this place."

"Sir," said Mathew with a grin of contempt, "you will be a benefactor indeed."

Now, before I answered Ralph's letter, which I kept for more than a month in my bosom, reading it every day when I could snatch a moment, Mathew came to me, and after a little preamble, of which I am going to tell you, re-opened the distasteful subject of his courtship. I was in the garden, gathering herbs for a mint-julep, when I saw him standing at the garden-gate. He looked so jocund, he smiled so pleasantly, and he wore so self-satisfied an air, that I was quite certain some evil thing had happened.

"Drusilla," he said, "I have heard certain intelligence. You may depend upon its truth, which is confirmed in every particular. I think that you should be the first to hear it, sad though it be, yet what I could not but expect."

"I suppose," I said with a laugh, because I knew that he was about to invent some wicked falsehood, "I suppose you have got something to tell me about Ralph, whom your cruel conduct drove out into the world?"

"Nay," he replied, looking darkly, yet with a smile, "you may say what you please; you cannot offend me. I have just come from Alnwick, where I sold four fat beasts. At the inn I fell in with a strolling player, and talked with him over a glass about his wandering life. Presently I asked him whether he had seen, anywhere upon his travels, especially in places where actors like himself, with profligates and thieves resort, such a lad as Ralph

It is wonderful to relate that he remembered seeing the boy at a place called Grantham. It was about six or seven years ago. The reprobate lad was making love—actually making love—to a young actress. When my informant came across the party again, Ralph had left them."

At first I concluded that this was sheer fabrication, but afterwards gleaned that it was to a certain extent true; that is, that Ralph had made the acquaintance of the actress and her family on his way to London; but there was no love-making. How could there be, when he was already in love with me? And what follows was pure and clumsy invention.

"He wandered about with them playing and acting," Mathew went on, "for four or five years. Then he deserted them, or was turned out in disgrace—it matters not which—and, I am ashamed to say"—but he looked delighted—"took to the road, where he is now known everywhere as Black Ralph, or Bloody Ralph."

"Are you quite sure of what you say?"

"As sure as I am that he will be hanged as soon as he is caught."

I know not by what reasons Mathew persuaded himself, if indeed he did persuade himself, that Black Ralph, who was a notorious highwayman about this time, and practised his wicked calling upon the York Road, was Ralph Embleton. Yet he made so certain of it that he told—under strict promise of secrecy—the barber, who told everybody, also under promise of secrecy, and it was noised abroad that the distinction of giving birth to the most blood-thirsty villain in England belonged to Warkworth, and many people advised Mathew to go armed, and to provide his house with a loaded blunderbuss, a bulldog, and a few man-traps, because his cousin would probably visit him with intent to murder as well as rob.

"I suppose," Mathew went on to me, "that you will now give up thinking of that young vagabond. A pretty girl like you should throw your thoughts higher. Why, though your father's a beggar, as one may say—"

"He is not a beggar, so long as my grandmother lives."

"Perhaps that will not be much longer," he replied with an ugly grin. "Now, Drusilla, listen to me. You know that I've set my fancy upon you. I've been waiting just till you grew up, and then for—for one or two little things to ripen which have now ripened and turned out pretty

well. Now that everything is ready, there is no reason to wait any longer. Ralph being a highwayman and certain to be hanged—"

"Then, Mathew," I replied, "I will wait until he is hanged, and then you can talk to me again if you like. Now, go away, and leave me to my work."

He went away for that time, and next morning his sister Barbara came. She was at first mysterious about sudden changes of fortune, unexpected reverses, and the judgments of angered Heaven. These things I did not then consider as pertaining to myself, because I knew not how I had especially angered heaven, more, that is, than thoughtless youth may do at any time, and yet obtain forgiveness by daily prayer. She also added a certain exhortation to kiss the rod, which I pass over. Then she launched into praises of her brother. He was most industrious, she said; up early and to work before day-break; he was full of religion, which surprised me very much to hear; he was thrifty and had already saved a large sum of money—this, I found afterwards, was false; he could provide a comfortable home, and happy, indeed, she added, would be the woman on whom his choice should fall. Added to this that he was no longer young and scatter-brained, but arrived at the sober age of three or four and thirty; and that Mathew's wife would have the advantage of her own society, help, example, and admonition.

I told her that Mathew had got his answer, and that I thought it hard that a woman could not be supposed to know her own mind in so important a matter.

"What is your answer, then?" she asked.

"I will talk to Mathew on the subject again," I replied, "when Ralph is hanged, since this is a thing which both you and he desire so vehemently."

Two days afterwards Mathew himself met me as I was on my way to the castle. He begged me to give him another hearing, and, as I could not refuse so simple a thing, I led him by the path below the castle to the bank of the river, where he could talk at his ease and unheard.

First it was the same story. Would I forget the young villain and marry him? He was so much in love with me, that he would not say as some men—not so rich, mind you, as himself—would say, that I might go hang myself in my garters for aught he cared. He would forgive my

disrespect and impudence; he would forget the past altogether; people should see that he was of a truly noble and forgiving disposition; he would give me another chance, so great was his generosity. Very well, then, would I marry him?

I replied very gravely, that he had already received his answer. When Ralph was hanged, and not before, I would listen to him. Then I asked him seriously why he thought so meanly of me as to try this trumped-up story about play-actors and highwaymen upon me, and reminded him of what a truly wicked disposition he must be, thus to glory and delight in the supposed wickedness of his cousin, whose guardian he had been, and whose lands he now occupied.

He grew angry at this plain-speaking, and began to swear, as is the wont of such men. If kindness would not move me, he said, something else should be tried. I thought I was free and independent of him, did I? I should see what power was in his hands, and what mischief he could do me. I was young and imprudent. It chafed me to hear that he, and such a man as he, could do me harm—as if the meanest wretch who ever lived cannot do harm—and I told him what I ought to have kept a secret, that so long as Ralph lived, I should not want a protector; and that so far from his being a highwayman, I knew certainly that he was a prosperous gentleman, already held in great honour, and respected by all.

He was so staggered by this intelligence that I thought he was going to have some kind of fit. Consider how much it meant to him; he would certainly have to give up the mill, and to render a strict account of all his doings; he would be reduced to the station of a poor small farmer; he would be robbed of his revenge; and he would be convicted as a slanderer and calumnious person, if that mattered aught.

First he blustered and threatened. I dared, did I, to reproach him; very good, I should see what things he could do; I should laugh the other side of my mouth. Did I refuse his offer? Very well then. I should find out what his displeasure meant. And, perhaps, before long, I should be sorry for the insult I had offered him, and the proposal I had refused. He then flung away, becoming at this point speechless, and indeed he looked so angry that I was afraid he would have thrown me into the stream.

I went home, and said nothing to any-

body about the business; but I was troubled in my mind, and greatly afraid that the man would do some dreadful mischief if he could.

Well, he came again a third time to me. It was three days later. If I was disquieted, I could see that he was more so. His red cheeks were become pale, and his eyes were red. He was quiet in his manner, and held out his hand.

"Drusilla," he said, "I was wrong the other day. You won't marry me? Very well then. Never mind; someone else will if I want. What matters one woman more than another, if you come to think about it? What hurt me most wasn't your refusal, which I don't care for not one brass farthing, but your saying that I wanted Ralph to go bad. That was cruel to such a cousin and guardian as I was to that boy."

"Well, Mathew," I said, "if I was wrong, I pray you to forgive me."

"I should like to know, on the contrary, that he was becoming a credit to his family. I say," he added, "I should like to know it, if you can assure me of the fact."

"Then you may depend upon the truth of my statement, Mathew," I said. "He is already a credit to your family."

"How joyful a thing this is!" He folded his hands and raised his eyes hypocritically to heaven. "It shows that the many corrections I gave him produced their effect. I was a throwing of the bread upon the waters. After many days, as one may say, it hath come back to me."

He spoke with a sweetness which did not deceive me.

"And this prosperity, Drusilla. Who told you of it?"

"That I must not say."

"Where, in what place, is the boy?"

"That I shall not tell you."

"How is he employed, then?"

"I must say nothing, Mathew. Do not ask me. It is very certain that Ralph is alive, and that he is prospering. I shall answer no more questions."

"I will ask other people, then."

"It is of no use," I said hurriedly. "There is no one knows except me." This was not true, but at the moment I was thinking of my mother, who certainly did not know.

"No one knows except you?" he repeated. "That is strange indeed."

"It is very strange."

"And how long," he went on, "is the mystery to be kept up?"

"As long," I replied, "as your cousin pleases."

Then his sweetness left him, and he fell again into a madness of wrath. He went away, however, when he found that I would tell him nothing.

All this time I had not written my answer to Ralph's sweet letter. The reason was that I feared my words would prove so poor and weak compared with his noble language; and I was afraid besides that what I might say would offend or disappoint him. What maiden but would have been ashamed? Yet this business with Mathew made me resolve to lose no time, and I began seriously to consider what I should say in reply to the long letter which I carried in my bosom and read daily. In order to be undisturbed, I carried paper and pen to the Fugleman's room at the castle, and wrote my letter in the afternoons, whenever I could snatch an hour from my work. What was I to say in answer to the many tender protestations of Ralph? And how was I to speak of Mathew?

"Tell him," said the Fugleman, "that Mathew is a villain. Last Tuesday week there was a run to Coldstream—lace and brandy—Mathew stood in and found the ponies. Yet he is a villain."

"And what about yourself?" I asked.

"As for me," he said, "I always said that once the boy got his foot on the lowest rung, it would not be long before he was on the top of the ladder. Half-way up and more he is, I reckon by now. So that I am not surprised to hear of his good fortune, and only wish I was young enough to be his Fugleman. Tell him that first of all. But Mathew is a villain. Next you may say that I'm well and hearty, and likely to continue in the way of grace, such being my constitution and my habits. Mathew, his cousin, is a desperate villain. Tell him that. You may tell him next, that if he still regardeth eggs, I have got such a collection for him as can't be matched. As for Mathew, he is a rogue and a villain. Fish, tell him, are plentiful this year, and otters there be in plenty. Yesterday I trapped a badger, and I know of a marten opposite the Hermitage. The birds are wild, but I had good sport with his Worship last winter, and hope to do something by myself when the nights draw out. Say next, that I send him my faithful respects

and humble good wishes; and Mathew is a villain. And as for your own pretty self, you sit down and tell him that there isn't a straighter maid, nor one more beautiful, on the banks of Coquet; while, as for eyes and shape and rosy lips——"

"Indeed," I cried, "I shall tell him no such nonsense. No, I will not tell him such nonsense."

"Why, he loves thee, sweetheart. Say it, child, to please him, so lonely he is, and so far away from us. I wish he had thy picture just now, with the pretty blushes on the cheeks and all. A girl ought to be proud for such as him to fall in love with her."

"Is he truly in love with me?" I said, with tears coming into my eyes, because now that the words were spoken, I knew very well how much I longed for that very thing. "Why, he says he wishes me happiness with my husband. As if I could take any husband but Ralph."

"There—there," he cried, "tell him that. Tell him that, and it will make him happy and bring him home."

"You think such a little thing as that would bring him home?"

"There's one thing," said the old man, "which women can never understand, and that's the strength and power of love. There was a man in Lord Falkland's regiment—but I cannot tell thee all the story. There was a young gentleman in the Fourteenth, when we were stationed at Gibraltar, in love with a Spanish lady—but of that another time. What did the soldier care that he got three hundred the next day? And as for the young gentleman, he would have done the same—and always said so—if another dozen of duels was to come after it, and him to be pinked in every one. Cheerfully he would have done the same for such another charmer. Ah! he would, and more; but women never understand."

With these mysterious words did he encourage me as to the force and vehemence among men, of the passion called love.

If Ralph was only home again, we should have a protector. I thought of this and hesitated no longer. Yet it was an unmaidenly thing which I did, and to this day I am uncertain as to whether I was justified by all the circumstances. It was, besides, a dangerous thing to do, because I am convinced that nothing more effectually turns aside the fancy of a man for a woman—which is a delicate and tender plant, even at its strongest—than the

thought that she is lacking in the modesty and reserve which are the choicest virtues of a maiden. Yet I ran that danger, though I imperilled the most precious thing to me in all the world, the heart of my Ralph. But there is a time to speak, as well as a time to keep silence. What I said was this:

"DEAR RALPH,—I have now received your letter, and I thank you for it with all my heart. My father hath lost all in London, and is now returned to his native place; we are, therefore, poor indeed, and have nothing to live upon except the annuity which he long ago bought for my grandmother, who fails daily; when she dies we shall have nothing. Also, my father is afflicted with a strange belief that he is rich. This makes us unhappy. Mathew hath spread abroad a report that the mill is his, and not yours at all, by reason of a second will, which nobody has seen except himself. I fear that you will have trouble with your cousin. The Fugleman is well and hearty, and bids me tell you——" Here I set forth as many of the messages as I could remember. "As regards myself, he bade me say many things, out of his kind heart, for he loves me; but I must not write them down. My dear Ralph, do not say again that you want me to have a husband. I shall never marry any husband, nor love any man, except yourself, if you still continue to love me. Indeed, there is no moment of the day—if you will not think me unmaidenly to confess this thing—when you are out of my thoughts, and I pray night and morning for your safety and speedy return. Mathew has asked me to marry him, and is angered because I refused. He has spread abroad reports that you are now a highwayman. Will you come back to us, dear Ralph? I am in great sadness, and I am afraid that Mathew means some mischief. Yet I would not mar your fortune by calling you away from the work you have in hand. Mathew threatens me with revenge, and Barbara, his sister, bids me read passages in the Holy Scriptures which threaten woe to sinners. I am afraid what they may do, though I cannot think that they can do us any evil. It makes me unhappy to think that any can believe here that you have become a highwayman. Yet I keep your letter secret, and no one knows where you are. The Fugleman says that a villain must have rope enough to hang himself. Ah, Ralph, if you could come back to us. But the quiet country would be

tedious to you after your splendours and the pleasure of an active life. But whether you come home or whether you stay, you must always believe that I am your loving

"DRUSILLA.

"P.S.—I forgot to beg that you may not take it ill that I have written these words. For, indeed, you may be married, or at least in love, with one more worthy than myself. And if that is so, I wish both her and you many years of happiness and love, and shall only ask her to let me love you still as my brother. How can Mathew presume to court a girl who has known Ralph?"

CHAPTER VIII. IS IT TRUE?

NOW was Mathew pulled asunder with a grievous doubt and anxiety. For not only might his enemy, as he considered him, appear at any moment to demand a strict account, but he knew very well that if he pushed on his suit or attempted any devilry with us, I might send for Ralph and ask his protection. Yet could my story be true? How could I know, and I alone, of his welfare and the place of his dwelling? Was it possible, he thought, that such a secret, if there was any secret, should be entrusted to the keeping of a mere girl? If the boy was really doing well, why did he not return on his twenty-first birthday and claim his inheritance? So that the more he thought about it, the more he tried to persuade himself that the thing was false. And yet he was afraid; I could see that he was continually haunted by the fear of what might happen. He sought me often and begged for information concerning his cousin. Next, he tried my father, but his memory as regards the lad was quite gone; and my mother, but she took no interest in the subject, and said she knew nothing about the boy for her part.

"Yet," said Mathew, "your daughter pretends to know where he is and what he is doing."

"Then," replied my mother sharply, "Lord help the man! go and ask my daughter."

"But she will not tell me."

"Then how can I? Hark ye, Master Mathew, you come here too often. My daughter hath given you her answer. She bears no love to you; she will have none of you. Go, then, and leave us alone. We are poor enough, God knows, but not so poor as to thrust husbands on our girl against her will. Leave us to ourselves, good man, and find another wife."

My dear and sacred letter arrived in May. It was in July that I sent off my answer. I might look for a reply in sixteen, eighteen, or twenty months—some time in the winter of the next year, seventeen hundred and seventy-three. It seems a long time to an anxious heart when one has to wait three weeks for an answer to a letter sent to London. What, then, must be the patience of those who have to wait for nearly two years? Had I reflected further on the perils of my lover's life, the daily risks of battle, wild creatures, treacherous foes, and deadly fevers, I must have been a miserable wretch indeed during those months of waiting. Yet I was sustained by hope, which belongs to the time of youth, and looked for nothing but such a reply from Ralph as would, I thought, remove every care from my mind.

What a fond and foolish girl was I to think that a mere love-letter—which was all I looked for—would be able to give us our daily bread!

After this, Mathew remained quiet again for three or four months. That is to say, he came no more to the house. And so we went on in our thrifty way—I engaged with my needle for such ladies as would employ me, my mother watching my father, and my grandmother sitting in her arm-chair beside the fire, for the most part silent. Indeed, we were all silent except my poor deluded father, who now added a new craze, for he announced one morning very proudly that he had received a despatch from the King himself, by which he learned that his Majesty had been graciously pleased to confer upon him the honour of knighthood, a distinction which in the present day seems reserved for eminent citizens of London rather than for soldiers, as of old. He was now, therefore, Sir Solomon, and his wife was my lady. He also terrified us greatly by saying that the new dignity would oblige him to assume greater state and a more sumptuous manner of living. Our banquets were sumptuous, truly, and worthy of a knight and his lady. However, in the matter of diet and lodging he was easily satisfied, having been accustomed to plain fare and so entirely carried away by his strange craze as to be persuaded in his own mind that a herring was a turbot; mutton-broth, turtle-soup; and a piece of roast mutton a haunch of venison. But now it was impossible to disguise from our neighbours what, indeed, they had long

known, that my father was incurably mad. He expected when he took the air of an afternoon to be saluted with the respect due to Sir Solomon, and hats off from everybody, and was pleased with obeisances which were meant in pity, if not in ridicule. And in his presence my mother must be addressed as my lady and spoken of as her ladyship, which made her hang her head at first and look foolish until she became accustomed to the vanity of the thing and found that it pleased him. For it is a strange thing that if you humour a crazy person in his craze, although you strengthen and confirm him in his belief, you make him happy and satisfied with himself, whereas, if you argue or contest it, or if you pass it over in contempt, you are apt to make him uncomfortable and uneasy without convincing him at all of his error.

So great, and reasonably great, was my suspicion of Mathew, that I was certain he would do something to revenge himself upon me, or to get me in his power. Yet I knew not—I could not guess—what he would do, or in what way he could injure me, as if the machinations of wicked men can ever be suspected and guarded against; as if the head of him who is desperately wicked may not conceive, yea, and execute, things which an innocent girl would believe incredible. The first alarm was caused by a visit from Barbara, who came to see my mother and myself, together or separately. She said she was a messenger from her brother, who, whatever I might say or think, was the most forgiving and the most long-suffering of men; that he was perfectly prepared, if I would make submission, ask pardon for the injurious things I had said, and reveal what I knew of Ralph, viz.: where he was living, what he was doing, and what were his intentions; to pass over all, and to take me once more into favour.

"Good Lord!" said my mother. "Does the man think he is the Great Bashaw? Favour, indeed!"

"Beggars," said Barbara, "must not be choosers."

At these words my mother flamed up, and asked Mistress Barbara many questions relating to her birth, parentage, wealth, religious professions, personal beauty, and so forth, leaving her no time to answer any. This is, with respect to the memory of a kind parent, a manner of speech common among women—even well-bred City

Madams when they are angry. Finally, she said that there had been quite enough said about Mathew's proposals, and that he was to understand again, and once for all, that they were distasteful; upon which Barbara coughed, and said that she had delivered her message, that she had no desire, for her own part, for the alliance, which would certainly be as distasteful to herself as it was to Mrs. Hetherington, and more so, for her brother had a right to look for fortune, which would be of much more use to him than a baby-face; that she was surprised, being a messenger of peace, and sent by a man of substantial estate, as all the world knew, to be thus treated by folk who were expected shortly to come upon the parish, and the daughter to be glad of honest service and a crust. But enough said.

"Hoity-toity!" cried my mother. "This is brave talking, indeed, from plain millers and simple farmers. Is the world going upside down?"

Barbara went away, but returned again a little before Christmas. Mathew, she repeated, was of so Christian a disposition that he was still waiting for submission and to know where the boy was to be found. She also held up her skinny finger in warning, and when I laughed and refused either to make submission or to tell where Ralph was living, she bade me tremble and read the first chapter of the book of the Prophet Joel, applying verses four to twelve to my own case, especially the last clause, which on investigation proved to be a prophecy that joy should wither away from the sons of men. I laughed again, but I confess that I was disquieted. What consequences? I was soon to discover that the woman used no idle threat, though I believe that she did not herself know anything of the abominable plot which Mathew was contriving for our destruction.

This, I say, was just before Christmas. We passed the season of festivity in comfort, thanks to a gift from Mr. Carnaby of a noble sirloin and some bottles of good wine for my father; but on Twelfth Night my grandmother, who had become very feeble of late, suddenly showed signs of impending change. This was a truly dreadful thing for us, not only for the loss of a good and affectionate parent, which those who have faith ought not to lament, but because at her death we should lose even the small income which we had, and there would be nothing but the house. It was with despairing looks that my mother and I sat

by her bedside all that night. In the morning she died, having been speechless for some hours; but, as happens often with the dying, she rallied just before the end, and recovered for a moment the power of speech.

"Child," she whispered to me with her last breath, "thou hast been a good child. The Lord will reward thee. Be of good hope, and never doubt that the boy will return to be thy protector and thy guide."

After her funeral I asked my mother if she had any money at all. She told me that on leaving London some of their old friends made up between them a purse of a hundred guineas in memory of old times, but after payment of their small debts and the cost of the journey from London, she had the sum of fifty-five guineas put by for unforeseen wants—that we must live on this money as long as it lasted, after which she supposed we must starve.

Fifty-five guineas! Why, it would last us a year and a quarter at least with prudence. Fifty-five guineas! It was a little fortune to us. It would keep us until I got a letter from Ralph. Whereupon I told my mother to be of good cheer and to wait patiently and hope for the best. She sighed, being never a woman of sanguine disposition, and ignorant of those secret springs of happiness within me which made me think lightly of present poverty.

And now you shall hear a plot of diabolical wickedness, which for the time was successful. We all know that for a season sinners are sometimes permitted to compass their own designs, but for their surer undoing in the end.

Two days after the burial of the Dame, at a time when we might be supposed to be overwhelmed by the calamity of being left destitute, Mathew came to the cottage. He looked ill at ease, and his eyes met mine shiftily, but he spoke out with boldness, while he produced a leather pocket-book and turned over certain papers within it.

"I have come, madam," he said, addressing my mother, but looking at me, "to inform you or your husband—it matters not which—that I can no longer wait for the interest or the principal of my money, and that you must be prepared to pay, or take the consequences."

"What interest? What money?" asked my mother.

"Why," he affected great surprise, "is

it possible that you are going to deny the debt?"

"What means the man?" my mother said impatiently.

"Nay," said Mathew, smiling, but looking like a hangdog villain the while, "this passes patience. I mean, madam, my loan to your husband."

"What loan?" she repeated; "and when?"

"Why," said Mathew, "if you pretend not to know, I am not obliged to tell you; but since—— Well, I will tell you. I mean this, madam: the sum of two hundred pounds advanced by me to your husband, for which, and in security, he hath assigned me a mortgage on this house."

My mother was quite wise enough to know what was meant by a mortgage. She asked, but with pale face, where was his mortgage.

Mathew unrolled a paper and laid it on the table. My mother read it through hurriedly. Then she sank back in her chair and covered her face with her hands, saying:

"It is true, my child. Here is thy father's signature. This is the last blow."

Mathew rolled up the paper again and put it in his pocket.

"Can you, madam," he asked, "pay me my money?"

"Go ask of the poor demented creature to whom you lent it," she replied.

"Then," said Mathew, "if the money be not forthcoming, I must sell the house. Yet there is a way——"

"What way?" I asked.

"You know the way. You have only to tell me where the boy is, and to marry me."

I shook my head.

"And you, sir," cried my mother, "you who lend money to poor madmen for the ruin of their house, you—a villain if ever there was one—you think that I would give my daughter to such as you?"

"Very well, madam, very well," said Mathew, unmoved. "Very likely the cottage will sell for as much as the mortgage. Perhaps, if not, your husband may carry his extravagancies to a gaol, as provided by a righteous law."

Here he lied, because, I believe, my father could be called upon for nothing more than the house which was his security.

My mother pointed to the door, and Mathew went away, leaving us bewildered indeed. Two hundred pounds! Now,

indeed, we were ruined. But what had he done with the money?

"Mother," I cried, "it is a black and base conspiracy. My father has never, since he came from London, possessed a single sixpence. Think of it. If he had a penny we should have known it. Try to remember if ever you saw the least sign of his having money."

No, there was none. He wrote no letters and received none; he bought nothing. His clothes, which were now old and worn, were the same as those he wore when he returned home. On the other hand, because he was of a generous heart, he was for ever giving away what he called money in large sums by means of drafts upon London bankers, which he would sign and press upon the recipient with kind words. For instance, on my birthday he always gave me an order for a hundred pounds on a piece of paper, signed by his own hand, "Sol. Hetherington," bidding me, because I was a good girl, go buy myself some finery and fallals. At Christmas, the New Year, Easter, Roodsmass, fair-time, and other times of rejoicing, he would fill his pockets with these valuable gifts, and sally forth—first to the Vicar, with an offering for the poor, saying that it was little merit to give out of abundance, that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver, that the poor we have always with us, that a rich man must remember the fate of Dives, and that, for his part, he would that the Church had all charities in her own hand, so that schismatics, profligates, and persons without religion should starve, with other pithy and seasonable remarks. Having received the Vicar's thanks, and a glass of usquebaugh to keep out the raw air of the morning, he would proceed up the village street, the boys and girls touching their caps and making curtsies to him, while the barber and blacksmith would offer the compliments of the season, with a hope that her ladyship was well. Then he would pass the cottage of Sailor Nan, and would call her out, and press into her hand a folded paper, saying that it was for Christmas cheer; that she must rejoice, with a dish of good roast beef and plum-porridge, and a great coal fire, and bidding her God speed, would go on his charitable way, while some laughed and some looked grave, and tears would fall from the eyes of the women to think that one so good and generous should also be so poor.

Alas! my father was one of those who could never become rich.

Even while we spoke of this, we heard outside the voice of my father, as if to confirm our words:

"It ill becomes men of substance, Mr. Carnaby, to allow poorer parishioners to bear the burden of such things. I will myself repair the roof of the church at my own charges. Nay, sir, permit me to take no refusal in this matter. If it stand me in a thousand pounds I will do it. Why, it is a lending unto the Lord; it is a good work."

It happened that in some way I had more influence over my father than anyone. That is to say, he would unfold his mind—such as it was, poor man!—to me with greater freedom than to my mother, who could never make any show of interest or belief in his magnificent designs and charitable schemes. I therefore tried to learn from him, if I could, the truth of this business. After listening to a long story of his intentions as regards the church and the endowment of the living of Warkworth, I turned the conversation upon Mathew Humble, and asked my father if he had of late seen and spoken with him. He said that Mathew now avoided rather than sought his company, for which he knew no reason, except that when you have obliged a man, it frequently happens that he keeps out of your way—a thing, he said, of common experience in the city, where young men, incautious men, and unlucky men often obtain assistance in the prolongation of bills and in loans.

"Since I have been of such great service," he said, "to Mathew Humble, he seems to think that he must not come so often as he did. A worthy man, however, and, perhaps, he is moved by the shame of taking assistance."

"Very likely, sir," I said, wondering what thing, short of the pillory, with the Fugleman and his pike beside it, would move Mathew to shame. "It is strange that men should thus court the appearance of ingratitude. Did you ever, sir, borrow money, sums of money, of Mathew Humble?"

"Lend, you mean, Drusilla," he replied, turning red with sudden anger.

"No, sir, I said borrow. Pray pardon me, sir, I had no intention to offend."

"But you have offended, child." He puffed his cheeks, and became scarlet with sudden passion. "You have offended, I say. Not offended? Do you know what you have said? Have words meaning for you? Should I, Solomon Hetherington,

Knight, known and venerated for my wealth, from Tower Hill to Temple Bar, and from London Bridge to Westminster, stoop to borrow—to borrow, I say, paltry sums—for he could lend none but paltry sums—of a petty farmer? Not mean to offend! Zounds! the girl is mad."

"Pray, sir, forgive me. I am so ignorant that I knew not—"

"To be sure, my dear, to be sure." He became as quickly appeased as he had been easily offended. "She does not know the difference between lending and borrowing. How should she?"

"And have you lent Mathew much, sir?"

"As for lending, I have, it is true, placed in his hands, from time to time, sums of money for which I have no security and have demanded no interest. But let that pass. I am so rich that I can afford to lose. Let it pass. And whether he pays them back or not, I do not greatly care."

"You gave this money to him," I said, "by drafts upon your bankers, I suppose."

"Why, certainly. You do not suppose that we London merchants, however rich we are, carry our money about with us. That would indeed be a return to barbarous times."

"Then there was the paper that you signed in the presence of an attesting attorney and of Barbara. What was that, father?"

He laughed and made as if he were annoyed, though he appeared pleased.

"Tut, tut," he said. "A trifle—a mere trifle; let an old man have his little whims sometimes, Drusilla."

"But what was it, sir?" I persisted.

"Mathew would have me call it a mortgage," my father went on. "A mortgage, indeed! Because he wished his sister not to know. It was—ho, ho!—a deed of gift, child. That is all. It was when I assigned certain lands to him. A deed of gift. We called it a mortgage, but I could not prevent showing Barbara by laughing—ha, ha!—that it was something very different. In addition to the money, I have bestowed upon him a field or so for the improvement of his farm. The gain to him is great; the loss is small to me. A mortgage, we agreed to call it. Ha! ha! Duly signed and witnessed. Your father, Drusilla, is not one to do things irregularly. Duly signed and witnessed."

This conversation made it quite clear to me that Mathew had contrived an abominable plot for our ruin. For the supposed

deed of gift which my father wished to sign, he substituted a real deed of mortgage, in which my father was to acknowledge that he had received two hundred pounds, for which he assigned his house for security, and without, as afterwards appeared, any clause as to time allowed after notice should be given of foreclosing. How far the lawyer was concerned in this conspiracy I know not. Perhaps he was innocent. Indeed, I am now inclined to believe that he was innocent of any complicity. How far Barbara—perhaps she, too, was ignorant of this wickedness.

All that night I lay awake turning the thing over in my mind. I planned a thousand mad schemes; I would break into Mathew's room and steal the papers. I would go round the town and proclaim his wickedness; I would inveigle him into surrendering the papers by a false promise of marriage; I would seek the protection of Mr. Carnaby. All these things I considered, but none of them approved themselves on consideration, because a forger and a cheat will always be ready, if he escapes punishment for the first offence, to repeat his wickedness. Lastly, I resolved upon seeking Mathew at the mill, where I could talk to him at greater freedom.

I went there in the afternoon about two of the clock. When I lifted the latch I saw Barbara sitting on the settle near the window working. Before her, as usual, lay an open Bible. Strange! that one who was so hard and severe could draw no comfortable things from a book which should be full of comfort.

She shook her long lean forefinger at me.

"I have known," she said, "for a long time the ruin that hangs over your house. I saw your father sign the mortgage. He laughed and called it a deed of gift, I remember. Ah! good money after bad. But my brother, who was foolish enough to lend the money, was not so foolish as to let it go without security. A deed of gift! He is cunning, your father, and would deceive me if he could, I doubt not." She turned over the leaves and found something that seemed to suit the occasion and my demerits. "'He hath made thy vine bare.' My brother is full of compassion. 'He hath made it clean bare.' Thy punishment hath begun."

"I wish to see your brother alone."

"Do you come in peace or in enmity? If in peace, you must first make submission, and confess your deceits as regards

the boy, who is surely dead. Nothing else will satisfy him. You can begin with me. Where is the boy?"

"What I have to say is with your brother, not with you."

"Go, then; but remember, when you are married, look not to be mistress here. I shall continue to be the mistress as I have always been. If you come in enmity, then you have me to battle with and not my brother alone. Two hundred pounds is not a sum to be given away for naught. Men are soft where a woman is concerned; Mathew may be a fool for your sake; you may look to wheedle him out of his papers. Ah, but you shall not. He may be a fool, but I am behind. I am not soft; your eyes will not make a fool of me, Mistress Drusilla."

She then bade me go within, where I should find her brother.

It was a cloudy afternoon, and, so early in the season, already growing dusk; Mathew was seated beside the fire, and on the table a stone jar containing Hollands which he had already begun to drink.

"Pretty Drusilla!" he cried, astonished.

"Have you brought the money?"

"No," I said. "I come to learn if you are in earnest or in jest."

"In jest?" Then he swore a loud oath.

"See you, my lass; if that money is not paid next week, your house will be sold. Make your account of that. But if you comply with my conditions, the papers shall be torn up."

"Then I am come to tell you, Mathew, that although I shall not comply with your conditions, the cottage will not be sold."

"Why not?"

"Because, first of all, that mortgage is false. I know now what you did. You caused my father to sign one paper believing it to be another. That is a fraud, and a hanging matter, Master Mathew."

He laughed, but uneasily, and he turned pale. Also, which is hardly worth the noting, he swore a great oath.

"It's a lie!" he cried. "Prove it!"

"I can prove it, when the time comes. Meantime, reflect on what I have said. It is a wicked and detestable plot. Reflect upon this and tremble."

He laughed again, but uneasily.

"There is another reason," I said, "why you will not sell the cottage. It is this. You are afraid that Ralph may come home and demand an account. Well, I can tell you this: that he will not come home just yet. But, if you do this thing, as sure as

I am alive, Mathew, I will write to him and tell him all. I shall tell him how you have persecuted me to marry you, not because you want me for your wife, and though you have had your answer a dozen times over, but because you want to plague and spite your cousin. I will tell him, next, how you have spread false reports about another will, and how you have whispered that he is turned highwayman. And lastly, I will tell him how you have practised upon the kind heart of a poor demented man, and made him sign his name in testimony of your own foul plot and falsehood. I will not spare you. I will tell him all. I will beg him to return post haste, and to bring with him officers of justice. Then, indeed, you may look for no mercy, nor for anything short of the assizes and Newcastle Gaol."

I spoke so resolutely, though, perhaps, through ignorance, I spoke foolishly, that I moved him and he trembled.

Yet he blustered. He said that all women are liars, as is very well known; that the boy was long since dead and buried; else why did he not return to claim the property? That, as for my story, he did not value it one farthing; while, as regards my accusation, he would laugh. In fact, he did laugh, but not mirthfully.

"Come, Drusilla," he said; "your father is welcome to the money, for aught I care. I do not desire to sell the cottage. Sit down and be friendly. Tell me all about the boy; and look, my lass—his eyes were cunning indeed—"look you. Write to the boy; tell him, if you will, about the money. Tell him that I am willing not to press it if he will give reasonable assurance or security of his own in exchange. Let him, for instance, give me a mortgage on the mill, and let him, since he is so prosperous, pay the interest himself."

This was a trap into which I nearly fell. But I saw in time that he designed to find out in this way what he had to fear.

"I have told you," I said, "what I shall do."

"Ah! your story, I doubt, is but made up by woman's wit. Drusilla, you are a cunning baggage. Come, now, give over; stay here and be my wife; thou shalt be mistress in everything. As for Barbara, I am tired of her sour looks. She scolds all day. She may pack; she makes the meals uncomfortable; she may vanish; she stints the beer. We will keep house without her. She finds fault from morning to night. She is a——"

"You called me, Mathew?" Barbara suddenly opened the door and stood before us. Her eyes followed me as I went away with malignity difficult to describe, and Mathew, sinking back into his chair, feebly reached out his hand for the jar of Hollands.

CHAPTER IX. THE WISDOM OF THE STRONG MAN.

WHEN I went home I told my mother that for the present, at least, we need not fear anything from Mathew. Of this I was quite certain. My assurance that I would appeal to his cousin, the doubt where "the boy" might be—there was no reason, for instance, why he should not be at Newcastle, or at Rothbury, or at Hexham, or at Carlisle—to say nothing of my charge of fraud, went home to his guilty conscience. These things were sure, I thought, to deter a man not naturally courageous, although his conscience might be hardened, from tempting the vengeance of his injured cousin.

So far was I right, that for the whole of the spring and summer we had no further molestation from him, but continued in our quiet course, spending as little money as we could, yet looking forward to the time, now growing very near, when there would be no more left to spend. As for myself, I may truly declare that my faith was strong—I mean not the faith of a Christian, such as I ought to have held—but faith in my lover, so far away. He would send me an answer. The answer, whatever it might be, would surely set all right.

Mathew not only ceased to persecute us, but he ceased to desire the conversation and company of my father. He came no more even to church, as if conscious of his wickedness, and ashamed to face honest people. He was rarely seen even in the town, and he left me quite alone; so that I began to think that repentance had perhaps seized upon his soul. Alas! Repentance knocks in vain at the heart of such as Mathew.

Though, however, we saw him not, I heard, through my faithful Fugleman, certain intelligence about him. Thus, he drank harder; he neglected his business; he quarrelled daily with his sister, who reproached him for his drunken ways, and the neglect of his worldly affairs; also, she continually urged him to recover the two hundred pounds owed to him, as she thought, by my father. She hungered and

thirsted after this money, which, it seemed, she did not know that her brother possessed. Why had he concealed from her, she asked him with anger, that he had so much as two hundred pounds, when he would not give her even money to buy things wanted for the house? Let him get the money back. Was he mad to let interest and all go? She let him have no peace; she longed to have this money; perhaps she longed for our ruin as well. Then she constantly threw in her brother's teeth the fact that if the boy was not dead and should return, if, in fact, my story was true, he would find the books and accounts in such confusion as might lead to their ruin. She wanted to know what truth there was in the reports, once so industriously spread, about a second will. In fact, she led the wretched man a dog's life, having a tongue sharper than a sword and more dreadful than a fiery serpent. But, as concerning the things she said of Ralph, I could have desired nothing better, because it kept alive in Mathew's breast the wholesome fear of his cousin's return. So long as that lasted, we were safe. We should have continued in safety, because that fear did not die away, but rather increased day by day, save for the instigation, as I cannot but believe, of the Evil One, and the concoction of a design even more wicked than that of the mortgage. I suppose the plot was conceived in the spring or summer, but it was not until the late autumn that it was attempted. The way of it was as follows (I do no harm, I trust, by speaking openly of a traffic which, as everybody knows, is conducted almost openly all over the northern counties of England and the southern counties of Scotland).

I have mentioned one Daniel, or Dan, Gedge, always called the Strong Man, because he was like Hercules, the fabled Greek, for bodily strength, who lodged with Sailor Nan. He professed to make a living out of his strong arms and legs. He went to fairs, and was seen on market-days in all the towns of Northumberland, Durham, and Carlisle performing great feats for wagers, or for money laid down. He would tie heavy weights to his nose and bear them so suspended round the market; he would lift and carry a pony or a cow; he would crush—but this was nothing to him—pewter pots with his hands, break iron bars and great pokers over his left arm—as many as they might bring to him; he would twist gold and

silver pieces of money, if gentlemen gave them to him, with his fingers; carry a dozen men upon his shoulders and in his arms; run round a table on his thumbs; pull a cart against a yoke of oxen, and perform many other surprising feats, the memory of which still survives though the poor man is dead, having been surprised by a snow-storm when in liquor, so that he sat down and fell asleep in the drift, his mighty thews availing him naught, never to wake again. By these performances he made great gain, which he spent, for the most part, on the spot where he was paid, and in drink, having a thirsty spirit, and, besides, being ready when he had the means to oblige other thirsty souls who had not. He was a man standing over six feet, with legs and arms of surprising stoutness, a square red face, and a kindly eye. Despite his strength he was peaceful, and the softest hearted of mankind. Now, though he pretended to live by the exhibition of his strength, which I believe was the reason why the Vicar called him Milo, it was very well known everywhere that he had another and a more important source of profit. This was in the running of "stuff" across the Border, a business which demands, as everybody knows, much caution, with knowledge of the country and powers of endurance. The "stuff" consists generally of brandy, lace, silk, and Geneva. Salt is also smuggled across, but a better profit is made out of the former articles, which are less in bulk and more easily concealed. There are many reasons why Warkworth should be a convenient spot for the illicit trade. First, it lies two miles up the river, and has many safe hiding-places, so that a cargo once landed at the mouth of the Coquet may be safely and speedily carried up the river, and bestowed where it is judged safe; for all along the steep banks there are spots clearly designed by Nature for the convenient storage of valuable packages. Not to speak of the thick hanging woods beside the banks, where enough Geneva and Hollands may be stored to supply London for a year, there is the Hermitage, whose double chamber I have myself seen packed full of silk in bales waiting for an opportunity, while in the Castle itself there are vaults, dungeons, passages, and secret chambers, known only to the Fugleman. Here, little suspected by my Lord of Northumberland, enough brandy might be stored to supply the county (which is a thirsty one) for a dozen years. The

Border is not, to be sure, so near as it is higher up the coast, but on the other hand, the look-out and watch kept by the gaugers cannot be by any means so vigilant and close as where the county narrows to the north; while more than half the run takes place over the wild moors and pathless slopes of the Cheviots, a place in which the Excise people find it difficult indeed to discover or to stop a run made by men who know the country. They have a service of ponies for the work, little hardy, sure-footed creatures, who carry the ankens, kegs, and bales slung across their backs, and can be trusted to make the whole thirty-five miles from Warkworth to the Border in a single night; that is, in seven or eight hours, the drivers walking or riding beside them.

Most of the farmers and craftsmen of Warkworth take a share in these risks and profits; one or two of them—of whom Mathew was one—often accompany and lead the expedition. Everybody knows beforehand when a run is arranged; many in the town know the very night when it will take place, the road chosen, and the value of the stuff. There is so much sympathy with this work, on both sides of the Border, and so many partners in the venture, that information is never given to the Excise, and hiding-places are found everywhere, with the help and connivance of the most innocent-looking plough-boy and the most demure country lass.

Now one morning—it was in November, when the days have already become short, and the nights are long and dark—Dan Gedge got up from his sleeping bench or cupboard in the wall, about eight or a little after, calling lustily for small beer, of which he drank a quart or so as a stay to his stomach before breakfast. Then he dressed and came forth to the door with the mug in his hand.

Sailor Nan was already seated on her stone, pipe in mouth, and three-cornered hat on her head. She had taken her breakfast, and now sat, regardless of the raw cold air—for all the winds that blow were the same to her—looking up and down the street, in which nothing as yet was moving, though the blacksmith's apprentice across the road had lit the fire, and the cheerful breath of the bellows made one feel warm.

"Fugleman and me," said Dan, yawning, "Fugleman and me, we was rowing up and down from Amble most all night."

"What is the run?" asked Nan, who needed no other explanation; "and who's in it?"

"Mathew Humble is in it for one," said Dan. "Going with it himself, he is, this journey. Ho! ho! Folks will talk of this run when they come to hear of it. The Fugleman thinks he knows. But he don't; no, he don't know. He's not to be trusted. I'm the only one who knows. Aye, a rare run it will be, too—out of the common this run will be. Folks will lift up their heads when they hear of this night's work?"

"What is it, Dan? Lace belike."

He shook his stupid head and laughed. How could Mathew have been such a fool as to trust him?

"Belike there's lace in it, and silk in it, and brandy in it. There's always them things. But there's more, Nan—there's more."

"What more, Dan?"

"Fugleman, he'll laugh when he hears the news. He's helping in the job, and he don't know nothing about it; only Mathew and me knows what that job is. Mathew and me—and one other."

"Who is the other, Dan? And what is the job?"

He shook his head and buried it for safety in the pewter-pot.

"Mathew Humble," he said, "is a masterful man."

"What is the job?" asked Nan, feeling curiosity slowly awaken.

"It is a job," replied Dan, "which can't be told unto women."

"Why, ye lubber," she sprang to her feet and shook her fist in the Strong Man's face, so that he started back; "lubber and land-lubber, you dare to call me a woman—Captain of the Foretop. Now, let me hear what this job is that I am not to be told. Out with it, or—" I omit the garnish of her discourse, which consisted of sea oaths.

"Mathew Humble did say—" the Strong Man began. But strong men are always like babies in the hands of a woman.

"Vast there, Dan," said Nan; "d'ye think I value your job nor want to know what it is—a rope's end? But that you should refuse to tell it to me, your shipmet—that's what galls. And after yester-forenoon's salmagundi!"

This accusation of ingratitude cut poor Dan to the quick. In the matter of seapie, lobscouse, and salmagundi (which is a mess of salt beef, onions, potatoes, pepper, oil, and vinegar, the whole fried to make a toothsome compound) Sailor Nan was more than a mother to him.

"Twenty years afloat," continued Nan, in deep disgust; "from boy to Captain of the Foretop, and from Cape Horn to the Narrow Seas and Copenhagen, and to be told by a land-swab, who never so much as smelt blue water, that I'm a woman!"

"O' course," said Dan feebly, "I didn't really mean it."

"Didn't mean it! Why—there! What is it, then? Is it piracy, or murder?"

He shook his head.

"Look ye, Nan. It won't signify, not a button, telling you. I said to myself at the beginning, 'Nan won't spoil sport;' and it's only a girl."

Only a girl! Nan pricked up her ears. "As if I cared about girls," she said carelessly.

"Only a girl. It's Miss Drusy—that's all. You see she's been longing to run away with Mathew and marry him, for months. Longing she has, having took a fancy for Mathew, which is a strange thing, come to think of it, and she so young. But women are—. Ay, ay, Nan, I know. You see I always thought she was saving up for Ralph Embleton. But Mathew, he says that's nonsense. Well—she all this time longing to marry him, and her mother won't hear it—no chance till now. So it's fixed for to-night. What a run! Lace, and brandy, and Geneva, and a girl."

"Oh—well; I don't care. Go on, Dan, if you like."

He then proceeded to explain that Mathew had arranged for a pony to be saddled in readiness; that the signal agreed upon between the girl and Mathew was a message from the castle carried by a certain boy named Cuddy, pretending to come from the Fugleman, who was to be kept out of the way, employed at the Hermitage, where the stuff was bestowed; the boy was to say that the Fugleman was ill. On receiving this message the girl would make an excuse to run up to the castle, where she would mount the pony, and so ride off with Mathew and be married over the Border. To keep up appearances, he went on—this soft-headed giant—it had been arranged that the young woman was to scream and struggle at the first, and that Dan should lift her into the saddle, and, if necessary, hold her on. Once across the Border they would be married without so much as a jump over the broomstick.

Nan slowly rose.

"I'll get you some more beer, Dan," she said.

She went indoors, and poured about three-fourths of a pint of gin into a tankard which she filled up with strong ale, and brought out to her lodger with tender care.

"Drink that, Dan," she said; "it's good old stingo—none of your small beer. Drink it up; then you can put on your coat and go about your work."

He drank it off at a gulp, with every outward sign of satisfaction. Then he suddenly reeled and caught at the doorpost.

"Go and put on your coat, Dan," she said, looking at him with a little anxiety.

He disappeared. Nan heard one—two—heavy falls, and nodded her head. Then she followed into the room and found the Strong Man lying upon the floor, on his back with his mouth open and his eyes shut. She dragged a blanket over him, and went out again to sit on her stone with as much patience as a spider in October. She sat there all the morning as quiet as if she was on watch. About half-past two in the afternoon there came slowly down the street no other than Mathew Humble himself.

"Where is Daniel?" he asked.

Nan pointed to the door.

"He's within, fast asleep. He came home late last night. I dare say he'll sleep on now, if you let him alone, till evening."

"Have you—has he—talked with you this morning?" Mathew's eyes were restless, and his cheek twitched, a sign of prolonged anxiety or much drink.

"Nay; what should he say to me, seeing that he came home in the middle of the night as drunk as a pig? Let him bide, Master Mathew. What do you want him for? Is there a run?"

He nodded.

She held out her hand. "I'll drink luck to the venture," she said, taking the shilling which he gave her for luck. "Thank you; this is sure to bring you luck. You'll say so to-morrow morning. Remember that you crossed old Nan's palm with a shilling. A lucky run! Such a run as you never had before. A run that will surprise the people."

"Ha! ha!" said Mathew, pleased with the prophecy. "It shall surprise them."

"And how do you get on with Miss Drusy, now? So she said nay. She will and she won't—ay, ay—I know their tricks. Yes, a fine girl, and spoiling, as one may say, for a husband. Take care, Master Mathew. Better men than you have lost by shillyshally."

"Why, what would you have me do, Nan?"

"Do? A man o' mettle shouldn't ask. Capture the prize; pipe all hands and alongside; then off with her; show a clean pair of heels; clap all sails."

"I believe, Nan," Mathew said, "that you are a witch."

"I believe," she replied, "that after your run you'll be sure I am. Go in and wake Dan."

The fellow, roused rudely, sat up and rubbed his heavy eyes.

"You can't be drunk still, man," said Mathew, "seeing it's half-past two in the afternoon."

"My head," said Dan, banging it with his great fist, "is like the church bell before the service—goeth ding-dong. And my tongue, it is as dry as a bone. Last night—last night—Where the devil was I last night?"

"Get up, fool, and put on your coat and come out. We have work to do."

The fellow made no reply. He was stupidly wondering why his head was so heavy and his legs like lead.

"Come," Mathew repeated, "there is no time to lose. Up, man."

They left the house and walked up the street.

When they were gone, Nan took the pipe out of her mouth, and considered the position of things with a cheerful smile.

"As for Mathew," she said with a grin, "he will get salt eel for his supper. Salt eel—nothing short."

She doubted for a while whether to impart the plot to the Fugleman. But she remembered that though he was no older than herself he would take the thing differently, and a fight between him and Dan, not to speak of Mathew as well, could have only one termination. Had she been twenty years younger, she would not have hesitated to engage the man herself, as she had led many a gallant boarding-party against any odds. But her fighting days were over.

What she at last resolved upon marked her as at once the bravest and the most sensible of women. But her resolution took time for the working out. She sat on her stone seat and smoked her pipe as usual. When any boys passed her door she shook her stick at them, and used her strange sea phrases, just as if nothing was on her mind.

It grows dark in the short November days soon after four, which is the hour

when folks who can afford the luxury of candles light them, sweep the hearth, and prepare the dish of cheerful tea. There was no tea for us that year, but small ale of our own brewing or butter-milk. And my mother sat in great sadness for the most part, not knowing what would be the end, yet fearful of the worst, and being of feeble faith. Certainly, there was little to give her cause for hope.

It was at half-past six or seven that I heard footsteps outside, and presently a knock at the door. I saw, to my amazement, no other than old Nan. It was a cold and rainy evening, but she had on nothing more than her usual jacket and hat. A hard and tough old woman.

"Child," she said earnestly, "do you think that I would lead thee wrong, or tell thee a lie?"

"Why, no, Nan."

"Then, mark me, go not forth to-night."

"Why should I go forth? It is past six o'clock, and already dark."

"If messengers should come— Look! who is that?"

She slipped behind the door as a boy came running to the door. I recognised him for a lad, half-gipsy, who was well known to all runners, and often took part in driving the ponies. A bare-headed boy with thick coarse hair and bright black eyes, who was afterwards sentenced to be hanged, but reprieved, I know not for what reason, and I forget now what he had done to bring upon him this sentence.

"The Fugleman says," he began at once, seemingly in breathless haste, "that he has fallen down and is like to have broken his back. He wants to see you at once."

"Oh," I cried, "what dreadful thing is this? Tell him I'll come at once. Run, boy, run. I will but put on a hat and—"

The boy turned and ran clattering up the road and across the bridge.

Then Nan came out from behind the door.

"It's true, then. The kidnapping villains! It's true. But I never had a doubt. Go in doors, hinney. Stay at home. As for the Fugleman, I'll warrant his back to be sound as my own. Wait, wait, I say, till you see Mathew's face to-morrow! A villain, indeed!"

"But, Nan, what do you mean? My dear old Fugleman a villain! What has he to do with Mathew?"

"No, child, not he. There's only one

villain in Warkworth, though many fools. The villain is Mathew Humble. The biggest fool is Dan Gedge. He is such a fool that he ought to be keel-hauled or flogged through the Fleet, at least. Stay at home. This is a plot. The Fugleman is in the Hermitage at work among the stuff. There's to be a run to-night. And they think— Avast a bit, brother. Aye, aye, they shall have what they want. There's a hock of salt pork and a pease-pudding for supper. I looked forward to that hock. Never mind it. The villain—he to run this rig upon a girl! But old Nan knows a mast from a manger yet, and values not his anger a rope's-end." Here she became incoherent, and one heard only an occasional phrase, such as—"from the sprit-sail yard to the mizen top-sail halyards;" "a mealy-mouthed swab;" "a fresh-water wishy-washy fair-weather sailor;" "thinks to get athwart my hawse," and so forth. To all of which I listened in blank wonder. Thus having in this nautical manner collected her thoughts—strange it is that a sailor can never mature his plans or resolve upon a plan of action without the use of strong words—she begged me to lend her my cardinal, which was provided with a thick and warm hood, of which we women of Northumberland stand in need for winter days and cold spring winds. She said that she should keep her own cloth jacket, because the work she should do that night was cold work, but she borrowed a woollen wrapper which she tied over her head and round her neck, leaving her three-cornered sailor's hat in my keeping. Lastly, she borrowed and put on a pair of warm leather gloves, remarking that all would be found out if once they saw or felt her hand. This, to be sure, was a great deal larger than is commonly found among women. When all these arrangements were complete, she put on the cardinal and pulled the hood over her head. "Now," she asked, "who am I?"

Of course, having my clothes upon her, and being about the same height, with her face hidden beneath the hood, she seemed to be no other than myself. Then with a last reference to swabs, lubbers, and land-pirates, she once more bade me keep within doors all night, if I valued my life and my honour, and trudged away, telling me nothing but that a piratical craft should that night be laid on beam-ends, that her own decks were cleared, her guns double-shotted, the surgeon in the cock-pit,

and the chaplain with him, and, in short, that she was ready for action.

I saw no more of her that night, which I spent in great anxiety, wondering what this thing might mean. But in the morning, fearing some mischief, I walked up the street to the castle. The Fugleman was in his room; he had sent me, he said, no message at all; nor had he fallen; nor had he broken his back. The boy Cuddy, it appeared, had been helping him, and running about backwards and forwards all day. When the ponies were loaded he had returned to the Hermitage to set all snug and tidy. When he came back to the castle they were gone. But no breaking of backs and no sending of the boy. This was strange indeed.

"Then, Fugleman," I said, "Mathew Humble sent a lying message, meaning mischief."

What he designed I understood in two or three days. But for the time I could only think that he wished to open again the question of his suit. Yet, why had Nan borrowed my cardinal and my gloves?

On the way back I looked into Nan's cottage. The door was open, but there was no one in the house.

I went home, little thinking what a narrow escape was mine. Had I known—but had I known, I should have been divided between gratitude to Heaven, and admiration of brave old Nan, and detestation of the greatest villain in England.

CHAPTER X. SAILOR NAN'S RIDE.

THE night was cold and raw, with a north-east wind, which brought occasional showers of sleet. There was no moon. The street, as the old woman walked up to the castle, was quite deserted, all the women and girls being seated at home about bright coal-fires, knitting, sewing, and spinning, while all the men were at the ale-house, telling stories or listening to them, an occupation of which the male sex is never wearied, especially when beer or rumbo, with tobacco, accompanies the stories.

Nan climbed up the castle hill, and passing through the ruined gate, began to pick her way slowly among the stones and heaps of rubbish lying about in the castle-yard. The light of the fire in the Fugleman's chamber was her guide, and she knew very well that just beside the door of that room would be lurking Strong Dan, with intent to seize her by the waist

and carry her off. Perhaps he designed to carry her in his arms all the way to the Border. This thought pleased her very much. Dan was quite able to do it, and the distance is only thirty-five miles or so. It pleased her to think of such a ride in the Strong Man's arms, and how tired he would be at the end.

Accordingly, when she drew near the door she went very slowly, and was not in the least surprised when, as she stood in the fire-light, the man stepped from some hiding-place at hand, caught her by the waist, and tossed her lightly over his shoulder, making no more account of her weight than if she had been a mere bag of meal.

"Now, mistress," he said, "struggle and kick as much as you like. It don't hurt me."

She cheerfully acceded to this request, and began so vigorous a drumming upon his ribs that had they not been tougher than the hoops of the stoutest cask, they must have been broken every one. As it was, he was surprised, and perhaps bruised a little, but not hurt. He had not thought that a young girl like myself had such power in her heels.

"Go on," he said; "you're a strong 'un, and I like you the better for it. Kick away, but don't try screaming, because if you do I shall have to tie your pretty head in a bag. Master Mathew's orders, not my wish. Besides, what's the use of pretending, when there's nobody here but you and me, bless your pretty eyes! I know all about it, and here's a honour for you to be carried off, nothing less, by your own man. Why, there isn't another woman in Warkworth that he'd take so much trouble for. Think upon that! Now then, miss, another kick, or a dozen, if you like. Ah, you can kick, you can. You're a wife worth having. A happy man he'll be. Lord, it would take the breath out o' most that last kick would. Why, I'll swear there's not a woman in all Northumberland with such a kick as yours. Keep it up."

Thus talking, while she drummed with her heels, he slowly carried her through the dark gateway, picking his feet among the stones.

Outside the castle, beyond the great gate, another man was waiting for them, wrapped in a great cloak. It was Mathew Humble. He had been drinking, and his speech was thick.

"Now," he said, seizing the prisoner by

the arm, "you are in my power. Escape is impossible. If you cry out—but I am your master now, and for the rest of your life I mean to be. You have got to be an obedient wife. Do you hear? I've had enough of your contempts and your sneers. You'll write to the boy, will you, mistress? Ha! Fine opportunities you will have on the way to Scotland to-night. Ho! The boy will be pleased when he hears of this night's job, won't he?"

"Come, mistress," said Dan, setting her down gently, "here's the place and here's the ponies, and if you like, just for the look of the thing and out of kindness, as a body may say, to rax me a cuff or a clout, why—don't think I mind it. Oh, Lord!"

It was a kind and thoughtful invitation, and it was followed by so vigorous, direct, and well-planted a blow that he reeled.

"Lord!" he cried again, "I believe she's knocked half my teeth down my throat. Who the devil would ha' thought a slip of a girl—— Why, even Nan herself——"

He asked for no more clouts, but kept at a respectful distance.

There were half-a-dozen ponies, all loaded in readiness for the road. Mathew, Dan, and the boy they called Cuddy were to conduct the expedition, the two latter on foot, the first on pony-back. There was also a pony with a saddle, designed, I suppose, for me.

"Now, Drusilla," said Mathew, "get up; there is a long journey before us and no time to spare. Remember—silence, whether we meet friend or stranger. Silence, I say, or——" He shook a pistol in her face.

She drew the hood more closely down, and pretended to shrink in alarm. Then, without any more resistance, she climbed into the saddle, and took the reins from Mathew's hands.

"That's a good beginning," he said. "Maybe you have come to your senses and know what is best for yourself. And hark ye, my lass, if you behave pretty, we'll send Barbara to the devil. If you don't, you shall have a mistress at the mill as well as a master. Think upon that, now."

Then the procession started. First Cuddy; then the ponies, two by two, who followed the boy as the sheep follow their shepherd; lastly, Mathew, upon his pony; Nan upon hers; and on the other side of her Dan Gedge, still wondering at the

unexpected strength displayed in those kicks and that clout.

In addition to the advantages already spoken of possessed by Warkworth for the convenience of a run, should be mentioned the happy circumstance that it lies close to the wild lands, the waste moors and hills which occupy so large a part of Northumberland. These moors are crossed by bridle-paths, it is true, but they are mere tracks, not to be distinguished from sheep-runs except by the people who use them, and these are few indeed. If you lose the track, even in broad daylight, you run the risk of deep quagmires, besides that of wandering about with nothing to guide the inexperienced eye, and perhaps perishing miserably among the wild and awful hills. As for the boy Cuddy, he possessed a gift which is sometimes granted even to blind men, of always knowing where he was and of keeping in the right path. It is with some an instinct. He was invaluable on these winter runs, because, however dark the night, whether the moors were covered with thick fog or impenetrable blackness, or even if they were three feet deep in snow, he never failed to find his way direct to the point whither they desired to go. In general, however, the wildest road, though the shortest, was avoided, and the ponies were driven through the country which lies north, or north-east of the Cheviots. But on this occasion, so great was Mathew's desire to ensure the safety of a run in which his ponies carried something more precious even than lace or run, that he resolved upon trying the more difficult way across Chill Moor, south of Cheviot. Even on a summer day the way across this moor is difficult to find. On a winter's night it would seem impossible. Yet Cuddy declared that he could find it blindfold. They were to cross the Border by way of Windgate Fell and to carry their stuff to the little village of Yetholm on the Scottish side.

If you draw a straight line on a county map almost due west from Warkworth, you will find that it passes near very few villages indeed all the way to the Scottish Border. The ground begins to rise a mile or so west of the town, and though up to the edge of the moors the country is mostly cultivated, the only villages passed the whole way for thirty miles, are Edlingham, Whittingham, and Alnham, and it is very easy for safety's sake to avoid these. First, then, they rode slowly and in silence for six

or seven miles as straight across the country as hedges and gates would allow. Presently striking the bed of the Hampeth Burn, they followed it up, rough as the way was, as far as the Black Tarn, which lies among the hills east of Edlingham. Here they turned to the right, keeping still upon the high ridge, and crossed Alnwick Moor, whence they presently descended till they found themselves in the little valley down which the river Aln flows at this point. Here the going was as bad as could be, the ponies feeling their feet at every step, and the progress slow. Yet they never stopped for an instant, nor did the boy hesitate. Mathew kept silence, riding with hanging head, full of gloomy thoughts.

It was past midnight, and they had been in the saddle for five hours and more, when they reached the place, close to the village of Alnham, where they were to leave the guidance of the winding burn and trust themselves to the knowledge of the boy upon the pathless moors. Here, under the shelter of a linney, Mathew called a halt. Dan produced a lantern and a tinder-box, and presently got a light. Then he found some provisions in one of the packs, and they ate and drank.

"You are so far from your friends now," said Mathew to his prisoner, "that you can talk and scream and do just exactly what you please, except run away. Now you guess what I am going to do. Once over the Scottish Border you will be my wife by Scottish law, if I call you wife. So that now, you know, you had better make up your mind and be cheerful."

She made no reply.

"Well, then, have you got nothing to say?"

She had nothing.

"Sulk, then," he said roughly. "Fall a sulking till you are tired. You may think, if you please, what your young devil of a sweetheart will say when he finds the nest empty! Alive and prospering, is he?"

He proceeded to express his earnest hope that the boy would shortly be beyond the reach of hope. This done, he informed Nan that the worst part of her journey had yet to be accomplished, and that she had better take some meat and drink, unless she wished to fall off her saddle with fatigue, in which case Dan would have to carry her. She accepted without speaking, and, under cover of her hood, made an excellent supper, being, in fact, already pretty well exhausted with fatigue and hunger. When she had finished,

Mathew offered her a bottle which contained brandy. He was amazed to find when she returned it to him that she had taken at one draught about half-a-pint of the spirit, so that he looked to see her reel and fall off the pony. That she did not do so he attributed to the effect of the cold night air and the long ride, being unsuspecting how strong and seasoned a head was hidden beneath that hood.

Supper finished, Mathew examined the boy concerning the road. He would tell nothing at all about it, yet he said he knew where to find it and how to follow it, and, in short, undertook to guide the party without danger by as short a way as could be found across the moor. He was certain that he could do this, but he would not explain how he knew the way nor in what direction it wound among the hills. In fact, how was a boy to describe a road who knew not north from south, or east from west, nor had any but the most simple English at his command in which to speak of valley or hill, ascent or descent?

The moor over which they crossed that dark night in as perfect safety as if a broad highway had been laid down for them, and was lit with oil lanterns like some of the streets of London, is the wildest, I suppose, in all England. I have heard of that great moor which covers half Devonshire, though I have never been in the south country. I have read about that other great and wild moorland which lies round the Peak in Derbyshire. I have ridden over the broad heath which stretches from Hexham to Teesdale, a place as wild as the people who live upon its borders, yet have I never seen, nor can I conceive, of any place or country so wild, so desolate, and so forsaken, save by hawks, vipers, and other evil things, as the land which lies by Cheviot, Hedgehope, and Windgate Fell.

The boy, as before, led the way, walking without hesitation, though the night was so dark. What he saw to indicate the road no one can tell. Nan, for her own part, could see nothing at all before her for the pitchy darkness of the night and the continual pattering of the rain.

Here is the very head of the Cheviots, the middle of the moors and fells, across which so many parties of plunderers, cattle-lifters, and smugglers have made their way. There is not a valley among these wild hills which has not witnessed many a gallant fight. There is not a hillside which has not run with streams of blood. There

is not a mountain among them all which has not its ghosts of slain men. The heath and ling have been trampled under the feet of thousands of soldiers, for in the old days there was no peace upon the Border, and every man was a soldier all his life. But, since the invasion of the Young Pretender, there has been no fighting on the Border. Smugglers have taken the place of the cattle-lifters, and peaceful ponies laden with forbidden goods go across the moor in place of horses ridden by men in iron. For those who love to be awed by the wildness of Nature, a place admirable and wonderful, but full of terror at all times to the heart of sensibility. I do not say, however, that the moors were terrible to any of those who crossed them on this cold and dark night, save for the darkness and the rain, and the fear that at any moment they might all go head first into a quag. The boy, to begin with, was quite insensible to any impressions which can be produced by natural objects; rocks, precipices, wild stretches of land, dark woods—all were alike to him. As for Dan, I suppose he never thought of anything at all. Mathew was too full of the gloomy forebodings which always precede the punishment of wickedness, to regard the things around him, and Nan, as insensible as the boy, was wishing only that the journey was over, because she was horribly cold and getting tired.

The boy led them, by that wonderful instinct, up the slope of the hill to a high level, where the wind was keener and the rain colder. He kept as nearly as possible to the same level, leading them round the middle heights upon the slopes of the great Fells and above the dales. The direct distance is not more than eight miles, but by reason of the winding of the way I suppose they must have doubled that distance. It was one o'clock when they left Alnham behind them, and it was already five before they came down the hill on the north side of Wind-Gate.

"Master," said the boy at last, pointing at something invisible, "yonder's Yetholm, and you are in Scotland."

Mathew started and sat upright in the saddle, throwing back his cloak. He was in Scotland. Why, then, his work was done. He laughed and laid his hand upon his prisoner's arm.

"My wife!" he cried. "Bear witness, Dan; my wife, I say."

"Aye, aye, master. Give ye joy, miss.

Master, another dram to drink the leddy's health."

Mathew gave him his bottle. Dan took a deep draught, and then wiping the mouth of the vessel, handed it to the lady.

"Take a drop," he said, "it'll warm your blood after that long ride."

Then followed so prolonged a draught of the brandy, that Dan too, as Mathew had done five hours ago, looked to see the girl, unaccustomed to strong drink, fall from her saddle. But she did not. And honest Dan marvelled, remembering, besides, the vigour of her heels and the unexpected reality of that clout. A wife so gifted with manly strength of heel and hand, who could also drink so fair, seemed to this simple fellow a thing to be envied indeed.

As regards the run, let me say at once, so as to have done with it, that it was quite successful, and proved a profitable venture to all concerned, though Mathew, for his part, never showed any joy when the work of the night was spoken of. It was a bold thing to venture across the moors on so dark a night; no one in office looked for such a venture in the little village of Yetholm; and the stuff, taken in the farmers' carts to Kelso, was all sold off at once, therefore Mathew might have been proud of his exploit. But he was not. And when the old woman, accompanied by the boy, came home two days later and brought the news of what had happened, the success of the venture lost all its interest in presence of the wonderful tale they had to tell.

They rode into Yetholm a good while before daybreak, and the people of the inn, —little more than a little village ale-house —were still in their beds. It was now raining again, with a cold wind, while they waited for the house to be roused and the fire to be laid. Nan began now, indeed, though she had borne bravely the rough journey of the night, to feel the keen morning air and the fatigue of the long ride. Her limbs were numbed, and when, at last, the door was opened and the fire lit, Dan had to lift her off the pony and to carry her in. They placed her in a chair before the fire, where she sat huddled up in her cardinal and hood, refusing to take them off.

When all was safely bestowed, Mathew thought him of his bride, and came into the parlour, now bright with a cheerful fire and a candle. He threw off hat and cloak with a sigh of relief.

"Come," he said, "let us be friends, Drusilla, since we are married. Yes, child, married. You would have me no other way. Let us have no more sulking."

She answered nothing.

"Well, it matters not." Here the landlord and his wife, with Dan and a servant wench, came in together. "Something to eat," Mathew ordered. "Anything that you have. My wife is tired with her ride over the moors."

"Over the moors?" This was the landlady. "You haven't, surely, brought a leddy over the moors on sic a night as this?"

"Indeed, but I have," he replied. "Come, madam." He seized her by the arm and dragged her off the chair—oh, the gentle wooer!—so that she stood before him. "Bear witness, all of you," he said, taking her gloved hand. "This is my wife, my lawful wife, by Scottish law."

Now whether such is the Scottish law I know not at all, but in Northumberland it was always believed that, across the Border, such a form of words, before witnesses, constituted the whole of marriage required by law, although, by way of adding some grace of ceremony, the pair sometimes jumped over a broomstick, or wrote their names in a book, or gave a blacksmith a guinea.

"My lawful wife," Mathew repeated.

The bride, who had been standing with bent shoulders and bowed head, straightened herself and stood upright. Then the witnesses observed a very curious and remarkable thing. The face of the bridegroom, which should surely on such an occasion show a lively sense of happiness, expressed first astonishment, then uneasiness, and finally terror.

The cause of these successive emotions was simple. When Mathew had repeated his form of words he would have dropped his bride's hand, but she now held his, first with a gentle pressure, next with determination, and finally with a vice-like tenacity which amazed and filled him with strange fears.

Presently, still holding his hand, she spoke:

"I acknowledge Mathew Humble as my true and lawful husband!"

The voice was hoarse and rough. Mathew, with his left hand, tore off the hood. Before him stood, her mouth opening gradually to make room for the hoarse laugh which followed, no other than Sailor Nan herself, in her short petticoats and her cloth jacket,

with a woollen wrapper tied about her head.

"My husband!" she repeated; "my loving husband! Would ye believe it"—she addressed the company generally—"he's so fond o' me that he couldn't wait to have the banns put up, but must needs carry me off! Saw ye ever such a braw lover?"

They were all astounded; and when she laughed, still holding the astonished bridegroom by the hand, some of them trembled, because they knew not whether she was man or woman, her voice was so rough, her hair was so short, her jacket was so sailor-like.

"Ah, hinneys!" she laughed again hoarsely, because the air had touched her throat. "The bonny, bonny bride and the happy groom! Kiss your wife, my husband dear."

She threw herself upon his neck, and began to kiss his lips.

"You? You?" He tore away his hand from her grasp, tried to push her from him with violence, but she clung fast to him, and retreated step by step to the corner of the room. "You?"

"Yes, it's me, dearie—it's me. Did ye ever hear the like? To fall in love with an old woman of seventy, like me, and to run away with her! I never looked to get another husband. There's a spirit for you! There's a bold spirit! Mathew dear, when shall we go back? Oh, the wedding-feast that we will have! Well, we women love a lad of mettle. Is there a boy in Warkworth, except my man here, who would carry his wife all the way across the moors when he might have had me asked in church?"

Dan, one of those who are naturally slow to understand things unless they fall out exactly as is expected, had by this time succeeded in comprehending the whole. He had, he now perceived, carried off the wrong woman, which fully accounted for the vigour of the kicks, the amazing strength of the clout, and the capacity for strong drink.

"Nan!" he cried. "It's our Nan!"

"It is, ye lubber," she replied; "and no one else."

He then began to laugh too. He laughed so loud and so long, being a man who seldom sees a joke, and then cannot make enough of it, that the landlord, the landlady, and the servant-girl caught the infection, and they all laughed too. Mathew raged and swore. This made Dan laugh the

louder and the longer. Mathew ceased to swear; he threw himself into a chair, with his hands in his pockets, and sat, cheeks red and eyes flashing, until the storm of mirth subsided. Then his dainty and delicate bride banged her great fist upon the table.

"No sheering off now," she cried. "You're my man, and a merry and a happy life you shall lead. Mates and jolly sailors all, this is my third husband. The first, he was hanged; the second, he hanged himself; better luck to the third. What a wife he's got!—what a wife! Now then, rum for this honourable company, and a fiddle for the wedding; and more rum and tobacco, and more rum. Stir about, I say." She produced a bo's'n's whistle, and blew a long shrill call. "Stir about, or I'll rope's-end the whole crew. Ram, I say; more rum for this honourable company!"

With these words she sprang into the middle of the room, and began to dance a hornpipe with the most surprising skill and agility.

CHAPTER XL. THE SALE OF THE COTTAGE.

WHEN the old woman came home with the boy, the story which she had to tell surpassed all her yarns of salt-sea experience. She told her tale nightly, in exchange for glasses of strong drink. And even Cuddy, the boy, was in request, and sold his information for mugs of beer. The men laughed at Mathew's discomfiture. To most men, indeed, the punishment of wickedness is always an occasion for mirth rather than for solemn reflection. They laugh at suffering, especially when it is unexpected; and if their dearest friend experiences a misfortune when he most expects a stroke of luck, they laugh. When a vagabond is flogged at the cart-tail; when a shrew is ducked; when a miserable starving wretch is clapped into stocks or pillory, they laugh. That is the way of men. But I have observed that they do not laugh at their own afflictions. Everybody, therefore, including the Vicar and his Worship, laughed at Mathew's discomfiture. They went so far as to say that Mr. Carnaby told the story to my Lord of Northumberland, who was entertaining my Lord Bishop of Durham, and that both prelate and peer laughed until the valets had to unloose their cravats. Yet I cannot see why one should laugh because a young man is mated to an old wife, expecting to have carried off a young one. To me, it seems

as if we should first condemn the crime of abduction, and next, bow to the rod.

After the first laughter, which was like an explosion, or a great thunder-storm, one of those during which the rain-water rattles and slates fall off the roof: a universal burst of laughter when all the men ran together laughing their loudest, holding each other up, loosing neck-ties, pumping on the apoplectic, and encouraging each other to fresh hilarity by pointing to Nan the bride: the question naturally arose if anything should be done to mark their sense of the attempted crime by those in authority. A most grievous and intolerable thing it was, indeed, that a young woman should be violently kidnapped and carried away like a sailor by a press-gang; forced to ride thirty miles and more on a winter's night, across the cold and rainy Fells; married willy-nilly in the morning without church or parson; and this when she had not once, but many times, refused so much as to listen to proposals of marriage from the man. All were agreed that this was a thing not to be permitted. Yet, what could be done? To run away with a girl of her own free will and accord, and when she would marry the man but for wickedness of guardians, is a different thing; many a maiden has fled across the Border with her lover, amidst the sympathy of her friends. But in this case it was like the carrying away of the Sabine women, and no words could be found by the moralist too strong to condemn the act.

While everybody talked about it, that is to say, for a whole week, there was so much indignation that if Mathew had appeared it would have gone hard with him among the men, to say nothing of the women, who would think of no punishment too bad for him. The townsfolk talked of ducking in the river, of pillory and stocks, and I confess that the thought of Mathew in the pillory was not disagreeable to me. Yet, considering the way of the world, perhaps, if he had been young, handsome, and of pleasant speech, he might have been forgiven the attempted abduction, on the plea of love inordinate. One man, we know, may steal a horse—but then he must be comely and generous—while another, if he is churlish and harsh, is clapped into gaol for looking over a hedge. While, however, they talked, Mathew kept away, nor did he return for three or four weeks, leaving his private affairs neglected; and no one knew where he was in hiding.

We had, however, a visit from Barbara.

She came, she said, not out of any love to me or my mother, who had used words so injurious as regards herself, but to express her abhorrence of the crime which her unhappy brother had attempted, and her thankfulness that this madness of his was defeated. She said that she knew nothing whatever of him; where he was or what he was doing; but she hoped that when he returned he would be in a better frame of mind, and feel the remorse which ought to follow such an action. As for the pretended marriage with the old woman, she said that was a thing not to be considered seriously. My mother received her excuses coldly, and she presently went away, after another attempt to discover whether I knew anything fresh about "the boy." She desired to know, she said, not out of curiosity, because she was not a curious person, as everybody knew, but because she feared that I might, by representing the late affair in its worst light, bring about a hostile feeling and even a conflict between her brother and the boy, which could not fail of being disastrous to the latter. My mother reassured her on this point, because, she said, Mathew was already well acquainted with Ralph's cane, and, having shown so much bravery in the late affair, which took two men to carry off one woman, would now most certainly have the courage to turn a submissive back to the chastiser when he should appear. Barbara thereupon went away. Though I loved her not, I could not but feel pity for a woman who had done and suffered so much on behalf of this thankless brother. She was grown much older to look at during the last year or two; her face was pinched, and wrinkles had multiplied round her eyes with her constant cares. This is an age when gentlemen of exalted rank think it no sin to be put to bed helpless after a debauch of wine or punch; I hope that more sober customs may shortly prevail; else, one knows not what will become of us all. Yet, though drunkenness is in fashion, I think nothing can be more miserable for a woman than to sit, as Barbara sat daily, knowing that the only man in the world she cares for is slowly getting drunk by himself in another room, which is what Mathew did. As to the idle talk about the other will and the rightful heir, I know not what she believed in her heart, or how far she joined in the wicked designs of her brother, which were about to be frustrated.

Then Mr. Carnaby, accompanied by his

lady and by the Vicar, came in person to express his horror of the crime, and his satisfaction that it was providentially prevented.

"We have discussed," said his Worship, "the action which we should take in the matter. At present all we have to go upon is the evidence of Nan, who is, she says, Mathew's wife, so that if such be veritably the case she cannot give evidence in the matter at all, and that of the boy Cuddy, an ignorant, half-wild lad, who knows not the nature of an oath. Abduction is a great crime; but then Mathew, whatever were his intentions, my child, did actually only run away with an old woman, and she makes no complaint, but rather rejoices, while he is rendered ridiculous. To kidnap a young girl is a hanging matter; but then, my dear, you were not kidnapped. In short, we feel that to bring Mathew to justice would be difficult and perhaps impossible."

To be sure, one would not wish to hang any man for the worst of crimes, and we had no desire to bring Mathew before any court of law or justice, being quite contented that the offender should feel certain of sharp and speedy justice if he made another such attempt.

"Can we not see him, at least," asked my mother, "placed in pillory?"

"I would place him in pillory," his Worship went on, "if the old woman who now calls herself his wife—Heaven knows with what right—would lodge a complaint. But she will not. He deserves pillory at the least. And as for rotten eggs, I would myself bring even a basket of new-laid eggs, so that he should want for nothing. And I would condescend to throw them. But she will not complain. She even laughs and boasts that she has gotten a young husband. And then, which is a difficult point in this doubtful case"—his Worship blushed and looked confused, while the Vicar hemmed, and Mistress Carnaby coughed—"he was running a venture across the Border, and no one knows—I say that no one can tell—who may be compromised in this affair as to what he took across or what he brought back, for though Mathew hath great faults, there is no one more skilled—more skilled, I say."

"No one," said the Vicar, which completed the sentence for his Worship.

"Wherefore, my dear girl," continued his Worship, "I propose waiting until the man returns, when I will reprimand him with such severity as will serve to deter

him—and any others of a like mind with himself—from a renewal of his wickedness."

Mathew did come back, three weeks later; but, although his Worship sent the Fugleman, carrying his pike, to the mill with a command that Mathew should instantly repair to him for admonition, and although the Vicar also repaired to Mr. Carnaby's house in his best gown in order to receive the offender, and to give greater authority to the discipline, Mathew came not. He positively and discourteously refused to obey.

There, it would seem, was a direct breaking of the law, or, at least, contempt for authority, upon which imprisonment, I dare say, might have followed. But, whether from leniency, or on account of that difficulty connected with the late venture, his Worship refrained from severity, and ordered instead that Mathew, for violence and contumacy, should do penance in the church. Here, indeed, was righteous retribution! He would stand, I thought, in the very place where he had caused Ralph to stand nine years before; he would be made to rise up before all the people, and, in a loud voice, to ask their pardon, and to recite the Lord's Prayer. I hope I am not a vindictive woman, yet I confess that I rejoiced on learning from the Fugleman that this punishment had been meted out to the evil-doer. We both rejoiced, and we congratulated each other, because we thought that Ralph would also rejoice. Little did we know of that great and lofty mind, when we foolishly imagined that he would ever rejoice over the fall of his enemy.

There was great excitement in the town when it became publicly known by means of the barber, who had it direct from his Worship, that this godly discipline was to be enforced on the person of Mathew Humble—a substantial man, a statesman, a miller, a man supposed (but erroneously) to be wealthy, and a man already thirty-four years of age or thereabouts. Why, for a school-boy, or a lad of sixteen, or a plain rustic to stand up in this white sheet was joy enough, but for such a show of such a man, this, if you please, was rapture indeed for the simple people. I confess that I for one looked forward with pleasure to the spectacle.

Alas! who would believe that man could be found so daring? Mathew refused contumaciously to perform the penance! This was a great blow and heavy disappointment to all of us; and we looked to see

the Vicar excommunicate him. But he did not, saying that disobedience to the Church brought of itself excommunication without need of any form of words. Let Mathew look to his own soul. And as there seemed no means of enforcing the punishment if the offender refused to undergo it, there was nothing more to be said.

The behaviour of Nan at this time was worthy of admiration. On Mathew's return, but not until then, she walked to the mill and informed Barbara that, as her brother's wife, she was herself the mistress, but that, being accustomed to her own cottage, she should not for the present molest her in her occupation.

Then she sought her husband.

It was really terrible to mark how the ravages of drink and disappointment together had made havoc with the appearance of this unfortunate man. Unfortunate, I call him, though his punishment was but the just reward of his iniquities. The failure of his plot; the consciousness of the ridicule which overwhelmed him; his shame and discomfiture; the thought of the old woman whom he had called his wife; the messages which he had received from his Worship and the Vicar—his disobedience being connected in some way with partnership in the recent venture; a dreadful vague looking forward to the future, and the constant terror lest Ralph should return, filled his mind with agitation, and gave him no peace, night or day. He neglected the work of mill and farm; he would take no meals save by himself, and he drank continually.

He looked up from his half-drunken torpor when Nan came in.

"I expected you before," he said. "What are you going to do?"

She poured out a dram and tossed it off.

"I came to see my bonny husband," she said, "before I am a widow once more. Eh, man, it's an unlucky wife ye have gotten."

"Wife!" he repeated; "wife! Yes, I supposed you would pretend——"

"Hark ye, brother," cried Nan, bringing down her cudgel on the table with an emphasis which reminded Mathew uneasily of the second husband's lot; "hark ye! Sail on another tack, or you'll have a broadside that'll rake you fore and aft from stem to stern. Wife I am; husband you are; wherefore all that is yours is mine." She hitched a rope into the handle of the stone jar containing the brandy and jerked it over her shoulder. "The mill is

mine, so long as it is yours, which won't be long, shipmet. Last night I read your fortune, my lad. By all I can discover, you and me shall part company before long. But whether you will hang yourself, like my second man, or be hanged, like my first; or whether you will be knocked o' the head—which is too good for such as you; or whether you will die by reason of takin' too much rum aboard, which is fatal to many an honest Jack; or whether you will die by hand of doctors, whereby the land-lubbers do perish by multitudes—I know not. Short will be our company; so, as long as we sail together, let us share and share alike, and be merry and drink about. Money—now, I want money."

He refused absolutely to let her have any money. Without any more words, this terrible woman prepared for action. That is to say, she took off her rough sailor's jacket, rolled up her sleeves, and seized the cudgel with a gesture and look so menacing that Mathew hauled down his colours.

"How much do you want?" he asked.

"Short will be the voyage," she said. "Give me ten guineas. Yes, I will take ten guineas to begin with. But don't think it's pay-day. I'm not paid off, nor shall be so long as— Pity 'tis that I can't read those cards plainer. Well, my dearie, I'm going. If I think I should like the mill better than my own cottage, I'll come and stay here. You shall see, off and on, plenty of your wife. Ho! ho! The bonny bride! and the happy groom!"

She left him for that time. But she went often, during the brief space which remained of Mathew's reign at the mill. Each time she came she demanded money, and rum or usquebaugh; each time she threatened to live with her husband; each time she terrified Barbara with the prospect of staying there. And the man sat still in his room, brooding over the past, and thinking, not of repentance, but of more wickedness.

One day, he rode away without telling his sister whither he was going or what he designed. He did not return that night, but two days later he rode into the town, accompanied by a grave and elderly gentleman, and after leaving the horses at the inn, he walked to our cottage. I saw them at the garden-gate, and my heart felt like lead, because I saw very clearly what was going to happen.

In fine, I felt certain that the money would be demanded and our house sold.

Mathew, goaded by his sister, who clamoured without ceasing for the money supposed to have been lent to us, and unable any longer to endure his suspense and anxiety regarding their cousin, resolved to bring matters to an issue. Fortunate indeed was it for us he had delayed so long.

They came in, therefore, and the grave old gentleman opened the business. He said that he was an attorney from Morpeth; that the mortgage, of which mention had already been made to Mistress Hetherington, had been drawn up by him at the request of Mr. Mathew Humble; that he had witnessed the signature of my father, and that the business, in short, was regularly conducted in accordance with the custom and the requirements of the law.

I asked him if he had seen the money paid to my father. He replied that he had not, but that it was unnecessary. I informed him thereupon that the money never had been paid at all, but that my father, a demented person, as was very well known, yet not so dangerous or so mad that he must be locked up, was persuaded by Mathew that he was signing an imaginary deed of gift conveying lands which existed only in his own mind, because he had no land.

The lawyer made no reply to this at all.

"Now, mistress," said Mathew roughly, "is the time to show the proofs you talked about."

"My proofs, sir," I addressed the lawyer, "are, first, that my father believes himself prodigiously rich, and would scorn to borrow money of such as Mathew Humble; next, that he perfectly well remembers signing this document, which he thought a deed of gift; thirdly, that we know positively that he has had no money at all in his possession; fourthly, that he denies with indignation having borrowed money; fifthly, that Mathew, like everybody else, knew of his delusions, and would certainly never have lent the money; sixthly, that two hundred pounds is a vast sum, and could not have been received and spent without our knowledge. Lastly, that Mathew was known to be a base and wicked wretch who even tried to kidnap and carry off a girl whom he wished to marry."

"Every one of these proofs," said my mother, "is by itself enough for any reasonable person."

The lawyer replied very earnestly that he had nothing to do with proving the debt; that he came to carry out the

instructions of his client, and to give us a week's notice—which was an act of mercy, because no clause of notice had been inserted in the mortgage; that the house would be sold unless the money lent was paid; that it was not his duty nor his business to advise us, but his own client; that the law of England provides a remedy for everything by the help of attorneys, and that, by the blessing of Heaven, attorneys abound, and may be obtained in any town. Finally, he exceeded his duty by his client in counselling us to put our affairs in the hands of some skilled and properly qualified adviser.

This said, he bowed low and went away, followed by Mathew.

But Mathew returned half an hour later and found me alone.

"You told me," he said, "six months ago and more, that should I attempt any harm to you and yours, you would write to the boy. I waited. If your story was true, you would have written to him at once, out of fear. But your story was not true. Ah, women are all liars. I ought to have known that. Barbara says so, and she ought to know."

"Go on, Mathew," I said.

"I waited. If your story had been true, the boy would have hastened home. Well, I thought I would give you another chance. I would carry you off. That would make him wince, if he was living. Yet he has not come."

Did one ever hear the like? To bring his own terrors to an end, or to an issue, he would have made me his unwilling and wretched wife.

"Now I've found you out. Why didn't I think of it before? I asked the post-boy. Never a letter, he truly swears, has been delivered to you—never a one. So it is all a lie from the beginning. Very good, then. Marry me, or sold up you shall be, and into the cold streets shall you go."

I bade him begone, and he went, terrified, perhaps, at the fury with which I spoke. Of this I forbear to say more.

When we sought the advice of Mr. Carnaby, we found that he entertained an opinion about law and justice which seemed to differ from that of the Morpeth lawyer.

"Your proofs," he said, "though to me they are clear and sufficient to show that Mathew is a surprising rogue, would go for nothing before a court. And I doubt

much whether any attorney would be found to undertake, without guarantee of costs, so great a business as a civil action. Justice, my child, in this country, as well as all other countries, may hardly be obtained by any but the rich, and only by them at the cost of vexatious delays, cheats, impositions, evasions, and the outlay of great sums upon a rascally attorney. Beware of the craft. Let the man do his worst, you still have friends, my dear."

So spoke this kind and benevolent man. I am sure that his deeds would have proved as good as his words had they been called for.

We told no one in the town, otherwise I am sure there would have been a great storm of indignation against Mathew, and perhaps we did wrong to keep the thing a secret. But my mother was a Londoner, and did not like to have her affairs made more than could be helped the subject of scandal and village gossip.

It was now already the middle of December; we should, therefore, be turned out into the street in winter. As for our slender stock of money, that was reduced to a few guineas. Yet was I not greatly cast down, because, whatever else might happen, the time was come when I might expect an answer. In eighteen months, or even less, a ship might sail to India and return to port.

Ralph's letter would set all right. I know not, now, what I expected; I lived in a kind of Fool's Paradise. Ralph was my hope, my anchor. I looked not for money but for protection; he would be a shield. When the Fugleman came to the cottage we would fall to congratulating ourselves upon the flight of time which brought my letter the nearer. He even made notches on a long pole for the days which might yet remain. Yet, oh, what a slender reed was this on which I leaned! For my letter to him might have miscarried. Who is to ensure the safety of a letter for so many thousand miles? Or his reply might be lost on board the ship. A letter is a small thing and easily lost. Or he might be up the country with some native prince; or he might be fighting; or he might be too much occupied to write. A slender reed of hope indeed. Yet I had faith. Call it not a Fool's Paradise; 'twas the Paradise of Love.

Then came the day, the last day, when the money must be paid or we lose our house. That day I can never forget. It was the twenty-third of December. The

mummers, I know, were getting ready for the next evening. In the night we were awakened by the waits singing before our house :

"God rest you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,"

and I, who ought to have taken the words for an exhortation to lift my heart to Heaven, lifted it only as high as—my lover. To be sure, he was always a good deal nearer Heaven than his unworthy sweetheart.

In the night there was snow, and when the sun rose the garden was beautiful, and the leafless trees had every little twig painted white ; a clear bright day, such as seldom comes to this county of rain and wind in the month of December. If one has to be thrust into the street, one would wish for a day of sunshine. Is it not a monstrous thing that this injustice should be possible ? Will there ever come a time when justice and equity will be administered, like fresh air and spring water, for nothing ?

So certain was Mathew of his prey that he sent the crier round at nine in the morning to announce the sale for noon. And directly after eleven he came himself, with the attorney ; and a man to conduct the auction or sale of the house. We put together, in order to carry with us, our wearing apparel. Mathew was for preventing us from taking anything—even, I believe, the clothes we stood in—out of the house. Even the Family Bible must stay, and the very account-books ; but he was rebuked by his lawyer, who informed him that the mortgage included only the tenement or building, but not its contents. We should keep our beds, then. But where to bestow them ? Whither to go ? My heart began to sink. I could have sat down and cried, had that been of any avail, and if my mother had not set a better example and kept so brave a face.

"The daughter of a substantial London merchant, my dear," she said, "must not show signs of distress before such cattle"—she meant the attorney and his honest client. "Get your things together, and we will see where we can find a shelter. My poor old man shall not feel the pinch of cold and hunger, though we work our fingers to the bone." Her lip trembled as she spoke.

Meantime my father was giving a hearty welcome to the astonished attorney, whom he considered as a visitor.

"In this poor house, sir," he said with

a lofty air, "though we have the conveniences which wealth can bestow, we have not the splendour. I trust, sir, that you may give me the pleasure of a visit at my town house, where, I believe, her ladyship will show you rooms worthy of any nobleman's house, not to speak of a plain City Knight, like your humble servant."

The attorney regarded him with wonder, but answered not. I believe he understood by this one speech how impossible it was that this poor man could have borrowed his client's money.

At stroke of noon the sale was to commence. But as yet there were no buyers. No one was there to bid except Mathew himself, who was impatient to begin.

It wanted five minutes of noon when Mr. Carnaby appeared, bearing his gold-headed stick, and preceded by the Fugleman with his pike, to show that the visit was official. He was followed by a dozen or so of the townsmen, now aware that something out of the common was about to happen.

"Go on with the sale," cried Mathew impatiently ; "it is twelve o'clock."

"Stop !" said his Worship. "Sir," he addressed the lawyer, "you will first satisfy me by what right you enter a private house, and next by what authority you are selling it."

The attorney replied with submission and outward show of respect that he was within his powers, in proof of which he exhibited papers the nature of which I know not, concluding with a hope that his honour was satisfied.

"Why, sir," said Mr. Carnaby, "so far as you are concerned, I may be. I am also satisfied that this business is the conspiracy of a villain against the peace and happiness of an innocent girl."

"With respect, sir," said the lawyer, "the words conspiracy and villain are libellous."

"I name no names," but he looked at Mathew, who shifted his feet and endeavoured to seem unconscious. "I name no names," he repeated, shaking his forefinger in Mathew's face, "yet villain is the man who would ruin a helpless family because a virtuous woman refuses to marry him. Villain, I say !"

He banged the floor with his great stick, so that everybody in the room trembled.

"I do not think, sir," said Mathew, "that your office entitles you to offer impediment to a just and lawful sale."

"Prate not to me, Master Kidnapper."

"If," continued Mathew, "Mr. Hetherington disputes my claim, here is my lawyer, who will receive his notice of action. For myself, I want my own and nothing more. Give me justice."

"I would to Heaven, sir, I could," said his Worship. "Go on with your iniquitous sale."

It appeared at first as if no one would bid at all for the cottage, though by this time the room was full. Then Mathew offered fifty pounds. Mr. Carnaby bid fifty-five pounds. Mathew advanced five pounds. Mr. Carnaby bid sixty-five pounds.

Mr. Carnaby was not rich; yet he had formed the benevolent design of buying the house, so that we might not be turned out, even if the rent would be uncertain. Mathew wanted not only the amount of the (pretended) mortgage, but also the pleasure of turning us out. Ah! where was Ralph now? Where was the "boy" to whom I was going to write for protection if he dared to move?

"One hundred and ninety!" said Mathew.

"One hundred and ninety-five!" said his Worship.

"Two hundred!" said Mathew.

Mr. Carnaby hesitated. He doubted whether the cottage of six rooms and the two acres of ground in which it stood were worth more. The hammer went up. He thought of us and our helpless situation.

"Two hundred and five!" he said.

"Two hundred and ten!" said Mathew.

Again Mr. Carnaby hesitated; again he saw the hammer in the air; again he advanced.

"Two hundred and ninety-five!" said his Worship, mopping his face.

"Three hundred!" said Mathew.

"Any advance upon three hundred?" asked the auctioneer.

Mr. Carnaby shook his head.

"Villains all," he said, "I can afford no more. I cannot afford so much. Poor Drusilla! Thou must go out after all."

"Going! going!" cried the man, looking round.

"FIVE HUNDRED!"

Mathew sprang to his feet with a cry as of sudden pain, for he knew the voice. More than that, in the doorway he saw the man.

He reeled and would have fallen but that some one held him; his cheeks were white, his eyes were staring. The blow he

had so long dreaded had fallen at last. His enemy was upon him.

The figure in the doorway was that of a gentleman, tall and stately, still in the bloom and vigour of early manhood, gallantly dressed in scarlet with gold-laced hat, laced ruffles, diamond buckles, and his sword in a crimson sash. Alas! for Mathew. The girl had told no lie.

The Fugleman, being on duty, contemplated things without emotion, even so surprising a thing as the return of the wanderer. But he saluted his superior officer, and then, grounding his pike, looked straight before him.

This was the answer—this was the reply to my letter. Every woman in love is a prophet. I knew, being in love, that my sweetheart would make all well; I knew not how; he would bring peace and protection with him, for those I loved as well as for myself.

Great and marvellous are the ways of Providence. I knew not, nor could I so much as hope that the answer would be such as it was—nothing short of my lover's return, to go abroad no more.

CHAPTER XII. "GOD REST YOU, MERRY GENTLEMEN."

WHAT remains to be told?

Ralph was home again. What more could I have prayed for?

While these things went on we were sitting in the kitchen. In my mother's eyes I seemed to read a reproach which was not there, I believe, but in my own heart. I had prophesied smooth things, and promised help from some mysterious quarter which had not come.

"There are five guineas left," said my mother. "When these are gone, what shall we do?"

I tried to comfort her, but, alas! I could find no words. Oh, how helpless are women, since they cannot even earn bread enough to live upon. When the breadwinner can work no longer, hapless is our lot. What were we to do when these five guineas were gone? For, if I could find work to keep my fingers going from morn till night, I could not make enough to keep even myself, without counting my father and my mother. What should we do when this money was gone? We must live upon charity, or we must go upon the parish. At the moment of greatest need my faith failed me. I thought no more of the letter I was to receive; I ceased to hope; my Paradise disappeared. I was nothing in

the world but a helpless woman, a beggar, the daughter of poor, old, broken-down people, whose father was little better than a helpless lunatic.

We heard from the parlour, where they were holding the auction, a murmur of voices, some high and some low. Suddenly there was a change; from a murmur of words there arose a roar of words—a tumult of words. Strange and wonderful! I should have recognised the voice which most I loved. But I took little heed. The misery of the moment was very great.

"So"—now, indeed, I heard the voice of his Worship, which was a full, deep, and sonorous voice—"so may all traitors and villains be confounded! Kidnapper, where are now thy wiles?"

I heard afterwards how Mathew would have slunk away, but they told him (it was not true) that his wife was without brandishing her cudgel. So he stayed, while his attorney, ignorant of what all this meant, congratulated his client upon the sale of the cottage. Five hundred pounds, he said, would not only suffice to pay his own bill of costs, which now, with expenses of travelling and loss of time, amounted to a considerable sum, but would also repay Mathew's mortgage of two hundred pounds in full, and still leave a small sum for the unfortunate gentleman they had sold up. Mathew made no reply. He looked fearfully into his cousin's face; it was stern and cold. There was no hope to be gleaned from that face, but the certainty of scrutiny and condemnation. What had he done to merit leniency? Conscience—or remorse—told him that he had tried to kidnap his cousin's sweetheart; to drag her down to destitution; while, as regards his own trust and guardianship, none knew better than himself the state in which his accounts would be found.

The words of Mr. Carnaby reached every ear. But yet I heard them not, as I sat looking before me in mere despair. For I knew not what to hope for, what to advise, or what to do.

Then the door was thrown open, and there was a trampling of feet which I regarded not at all, or as only part of this misery. The feet, I supposed, belonged to the man who was coming to turn us out. I buried my face in my hands and burst into violent weeping.

"Is this some fresh misfortune?" It was my mother who sprang to her feet and spoke. "Are you come, sir, to say that we owe another two hundred pounds?"

What would you have with us on such a day? We have nothing for you, sir, nothing at all, whoever you are; we are stripped naked."

"Madam," this was his Worship's voice, "you know not who this gentleman is. Look not for more misfortunes, but for joy and happiness."

Joy and happiness! What joy? What happiness? I began to prick up ears, but without much hope and with no faith.

"My lord"—this time it was my father, who saw before him a splendid stranger, and concluded in his madness that it was some great nobleman come to visit him. "My lord, I thank you for the honour of this visit. My lady will call the men and maids. I fear you are fatigued with travel. You shall take, my lord, a single bowl of turtle soup, as a snack, or stay-stomach, the finest ever made even for the Lord Mayor, with a glass or two of Imperial Tokay, the rarest in any cellar, before your dinner. Not a word, my lord, not a word, till you are refreshed; not a word, I insist."

At these utterances I raised my head, but before I had time to look around me, a hand was laid upon my shoulder, while a voice whispered in my ear, "Drusy!"

Oh, we foolish women! For when the thing we most long for is vouchsafed, instead of prayers and praise upon bended knee, we fall to crying and to laughing, both together.

Why, when I recovered a little, they were all concerning themselves about me, when they ought to have been doing honour to Ralph. The Fugleman had a glass of cold water in his hand; my mother was bathing my palms; Sailor Nan was burning a feather; my sweetheart was holding my head; and my father was assuring his Worship that nothing less than the King's own physician should attend his daughter, unless she presently recovered. He also whispered with much gravity that he had long since designed his Drusilla for his lordship, just arrived, who, though of reduced fortunes, was a nobleman of excellent qualities, and would make her happy.

We heard, later, that Ralph brought with him an attorney from Newcastle, a gentleman very learned in the law, and the terror of all the rogues on the banks of the Tyne. With this gentleman and a clerk, beside his own servants, he rode first to the mill.

He found Barbara engaged in her usual work of knitting, with the Bible before her

open at some chapter of prophetic woe. No change in her, except that she looked thinner, and the crow's-feet lay about her eyes. She recognised him, but showed no emotion.

"You are come home again," she said. "I have expected this. Mathew said the girl lied, but he was afraid, and I knew she did not. Girls do not lie about such things. You come at a fine time, when your sweet-heart is begging her bread."

"What?" asked Ralph.

"I said she was begging her bread. She said you were prosperous. If fine clothes mean aught you may be. Lord grant they were honestly come by."

"I will now, Colonel Embleton," said the attorney, "place my clerk in possession and seal everything."

"Where is Mathew?" asked Ralph.

"He is in the town. You will find him selling their cottage—Drusilla's cottage. By this time your dainty girl will be in the road, bag and baggage."

"What?"

"Pride is humbled. The girl has begun to repent of her stubbornness. Of course so fine a gentleman as you would scorn a beggar wench."

With such words did this foolish and spiteful woman inflame the heart of a man whom she should have conciliated with words of welcome.

He left her and rode into the town with such speed as the snow, now two feet deep, would allow.

An hour later, Mathew, pale and trembling, rushed breathless into the mill.

"Has he been here?"

Barbara nodded.

Mathew went hastily to his room. Here he found the attorney with his clerk.

"These are my papers," he cried, now in desperation. "Everything is mine. The house is mine, the mill is mine, the farm is mine."

"Gently, gently," said the lawyer. "Let us hear."

Mathew played his last card.

"A second will was found," he said; "it is in the desk."

"We will wait," said the lawyer, "until the return of Colonel Embleton."

When Ralph came back, accompanied by Mr. Carnaby, he found Mathew waiting for him.

"Now," said the lawyer, "let us see this second will."

He opened the desk and drew forth the paper which Mathew pointed out. When

he had unfolded and looked at it for a moment, he looked curiously at Mathew.

"This," he said, "is your second will?"

"It is," Mathew replied. "Found five years ago, and——"

"Quite enough," said the lawyer.

"Friend," he had by this time compared the signature with that of the first will, "I make no charge, I only inform you as a fact, that this document is valueless, as bearing neither date nor witnesses, and if it did, it would still be valueless, because the signature is a forgery, plain and palpable. It will hang someone if it is put forward."

Mathew dropped his hands by his side. This was the fruit of his labours. He had forged the will; he had made it of no use by neglecting the witnesses; he had forged it so clumsily that he was at once detected.

"Any well-wisher of yours, sir," said the lawyer, "would recommend you to put that paper in the fire."

Mathew did so without a word.

"Sir," said the lawyer, "you have saved your neck. Have you any more to say about the will?"

He had no more to say. The plots and designs of nine years came to this lame and impotent conclusion.

"Then, Mr. Humble," the attorney continued, "I have nothing more to say than this: Colonel Embleton expects an accurate statement of accounts and payment to him of all sums due to him without delay."

Mathew made no reply; he was defeated. He left the room, and presently, one of them looking through the open door, saw him leave the house with his sister.

Ralph spoke not one single word to him, good or bad. By this time he had heard of Mathew's attempted abduction and all his iniquities. There was no room in his heart for pity.

In the morning Sailor Nan came to draw her pay. She heard that her husband had deserted her. She lamented the fact, because she had intended to be kept in pork, rum, and tobacco so long as he was alive. But she was easily consoled with a jorum of steaming punch.

Thus vanished from amongst us one who had wrought so much evil, for which I hope that we have long since entirely forgiven him (but he was a desperate villain), and we never knew what became of him.

It was ten years later that Barbara came back alone.

We found her in the porch one summer

evening. She was worn and thin, and dressed in dreadful rags.

"Oh," I cried, moved to pity by her misery, "come in and eat, and let me find some better clothes for you."

She refused, but she took a cup of milk.

"I want to see the boy," she replied in her old manner of speech.

When Ralph came home she said what she had to say.

"Mathew ought to have had the mill. If it had been his, he would not have taken to drink and evil courses. You were an interloper, and we both hated the sight of you. When you went away, I used to pray that you might never come back. The waiting for you and the fear of you made him wicked. That is all I have to say."

"Where is Mathew?"

"Dead. Ask me no more about him. He is dead."

Ralph led her, unresisting, into the house.

"Wife," he said to me, "you have heard Barbara's confession. I, too, have had hard thoughts about her. Let us forgive, as we hope for forgiveness."

She stayed with us that night—an unwilling and ungracious guest—and the next day Ralph placed her in a cottage, and gave her an allowance of money, which she took without thanks. Perhaps her heart grew less bitter as years fell upon her; but I know not, for she died and made no sign.

On that year Christmas Day fell on a Thursday. Now, Ralph, who, though a grave man and the colonel of his regiment, showed more than the customary impatience of lovers, would be content with nothing short of being married on the very next day after his return. It is almost incredible that he should have had the forethought to bring with him a special license, so that we were not obliged to have the banns read out. Could I refuse him anything? Therefore, on the Wednesday morning, the very next day after he came back, we were married in presence of all the town, I believe, man, woman, and child, while the bells rang out, and our joyful hearts were warm, despite the cold without. I was so poor in worldly goods that I must have gone to the sacred ceremony with nothing better than my plain stuff frock, but for the benevolence of good

Mrs. Carnaby, who lent me a most beautiful brocaded silk gown, which, with all kinds of foreign gauds, such as necklaces, bracelets, and jewels for the hair, which my lover—nay, my bridegroom—bestowed upon me, made me so fine that his Worship was so good as to say that never a more beautiful bride had been married, or would hereafter be married, in Warkworth Church.

Thus do fine feathers make fine birds. When the next bride is married in brocaded silk, with a hoop, her hair done by the barber, and her homely person decorated with jewels, people will be found to say the same thing. Yet, since my husband, who is the only person I must consider, was so good as to find his wife beautiful, should I not rejoice and be thankful for this strange power of one's outward figure—women cannot understand it—which bewitches men and robs them of their natural sense until they become used to it.

After the wedding we went home to the mill, where my husband spread a great feast. In the evening came the mummers with Sailor Nan, who drank freely of punch, and wished us joy in language more nautical than polite. His Worship slept at the mill because he was overcome with the abundance and strength of the punch. Even the Fugleman, for the first time in man's memory, had to be carried to bed, preserving his stiffness of back even in the sleep of intoxication. And the next day we had another royal feast, to which all were invited who had known my dear husband in his youth. But to me it was a continual feast to be in the presence of my dear, to have my hand in his and to rejoice in the warmth of his steadfast eyes.

We are all, I hope, Christian folk, wherefore no one will be surprised to hear that on the morning of the day after the marriage, which was Christmas Day, after the singing of the hymn, "When shepherds watch their flocks by night," my husband, giving me his hand, led me forth before all the people, and in their presence thanked God solemnly for his safe return, and for other blessings (I knew full well what these meant). Then the Fugleman leading, his pike held at salute, he recited the Lord's Prayer. Thus in seemly and solemn fashion was the long sorrow of nine years turned into a joy which will endure, I doubt not, beyond this earthly pilgrimage.

The Right of Translating any portion of "LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY" is reserved by the Author.

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BONUSES DECLARED	- - - - -	£2,342,000

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